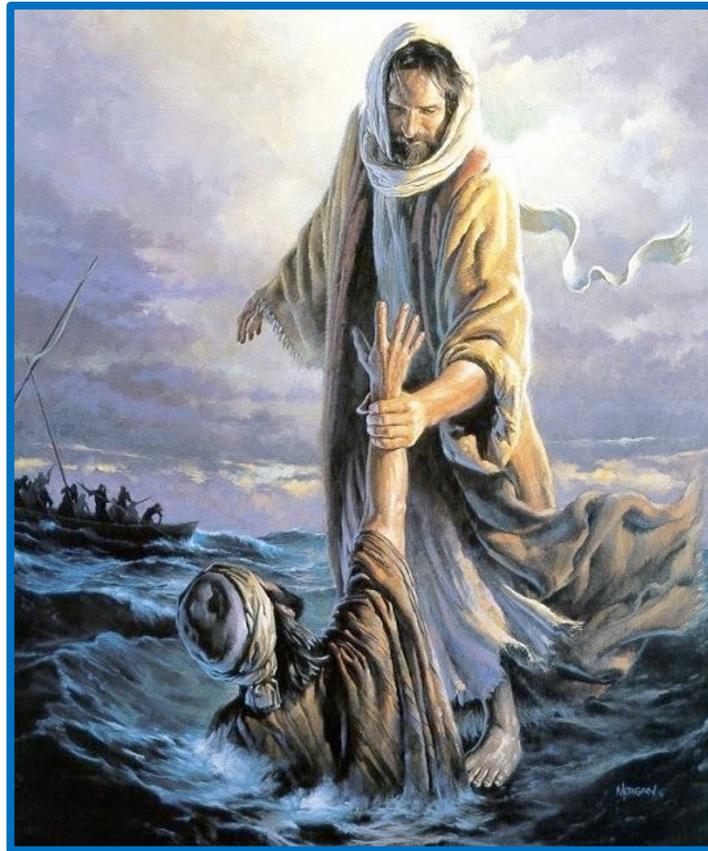


Basic Christian Doctrine: The Nature of God + The Gospel Plan Of Salvation



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Introduction

Doctrine is simply a teaching. It is the basis or foundation for how one lives and conducts his life. As the Chief Cornerstone, Jesus, working through the apostles and prophets, laid the foundation of the doctrine of the church. The early church held to their doctrine so closely that they were willing to give up their lives for it.

As the centuries passed, more and more false doctrines crept into the church, corrupting it from within. What began as a powerful inferno became nothing more than a glowing ember by the Middle Ages.

Then came the Reformation, as men began an effort to restore the church back to the original doctrinal truths of the original apostolic church. However, although some progress was made, many false doctrines were retained.

Today, the Spirit of God is breathing afresh across the world and igniting the revelation of the doctrine of the original church described in the historical record of the book of Acts. As we undertake a study of the foundational principles of true Christian doctrine, we will uncover just how far mainstream Christianity has strayed from the sound teachings of the Scriptures!

The Importance Of Doctrine

Before we enter into an in-depth study of the specifics, we must first establish some things regarding doctrine as a whole.

Today, the average person trying to navigate through the confusion of modern Christendom must deal with facing different denominations on every street corner. All of them present a slightly different “version” of “truth.” Unfortunately, many false teachings in churches have been established that all label themselves as Christian. From the New Testament, we learn that the departure from the original sound doctrine has been happening since the very beginning – and the apostle Paul scolded the Galatian church for so easily being swayed by aberrant teachings. If it was happening even then – within decades of the Day of Pentecost, then how much more should we be aware of this today, around 2,000 years later?

In the following passage, Paul establishes that there is sound doctrine and false doctrine. He makes clear the fact that many will come and will pervert and change the gospel of Christ. In fact, he even admonishes the church to hold fast to the original doctrine preached so much so that if even an angel preaches a different gospel, they should not listen to it. He actually states that a person preaching or teaching any other doctrine or spreading deception regarding the gospel is accursed!

“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of

Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.

But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man.

For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.” –Galatians 1:6-12

One other thing to make note of from the passage above is that Paul distinguishes truth, which comes from God, from false doctrine, which comes from man. It is imperative that we understand how utterly critical it is to carefully and prayerfully determine what doctrine we will follow! Let’s consider the words of the apostle John...

“Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.

If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed:

For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.”

-2 John 1:9-11

John points out how important it is to not just start out believing sound doctrine, but to abide, or stay, in this doctrine. In his second letter to Timothy, Paul says the following...

“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.” -2 Timothy 4:3-4

We are certainly living in such a time! Many teachings in churches today are altered and modified in order to please men’s ears! Many are altered and modified in order to “keep up with the times.” However, God’s word is truth and its origin is from outside of time! It remains truth forever! It is not dependent upon what is current in the minds of men. Rather than the eternal truth of God conforming to man, man must conform to God’s truth! It is essential that we place ourselves amongst those who value, protect, and teach the true apostolic doctrines that we are commanded not to depart from! Any other version of Christianity will not have the power to save your soul, as it is Christianity not in content, but in name only!

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common;”
-Acts 2:40-44

This passage from Acts establishes the fact that the word of God was never taken lightly. It also emphasizes that true believers being led by the Holy Ghost will be in agreement on the foundational truths of Christian doctrine. These early Christians were devoted to the true apostolic doctrine, and gave themselves fully to it, creating an environment for powerful moves of the Holy Ghost! In the following passage, Paul alludes to this unity of doctrinal truth...

“For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church.”
-1 Corinthians 4:17

Paul stressed that the doctrine that was being established was the same everywhere! It did not change according to geographic location, social status, or any other factor! However, in the next passage, he rebukes the Corinthian church for their tendency to be easily led away from this doctrinal truth and into false teaching...

“But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough.”
-2 Corinthians 11:1-4 (ESV)

So, Paul makes it clear that there are numerous versions (perversions, more accurately described), of the gospel that people will preach in the name of Christianity. In fact, in Acts Chapter 20, Paul affirmatively stated that “wolves,” or false teachers, would come into the church after his departure and would introduce these perversions of the gospel...

“For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.”

-Acts 20:27-31

So, when we look back at early church history, we should in fact expect to witness a great turning away from sound, Biblical, doctrinal truth. We should expect that the early church greatly departed from the original truth as practiced and taught by the Apostolic church. And that is exactly what we do find, very early on in church history – as we will discover in this study.

Many times, those who call themselves Christians may not intentionally be trying to deceive when they teach or believe false doctrine. Rather, they likely have allowed themselves to become

deceived. Maybe they were taught incorrectly and never heard anything else. Maybe they never looked into it more deeply and critically to investigate whether what they were told is Biblical. However, if you believe God with a pure heart, you are on the right path to truth. If you genuinely want God to lead you to a fuller understanding of truth, it is certainly His will to do so!

You must recognize the possibility that what you have been taught regarding God is incorrect, regardless of your level of consecration. In Acts, we are given a story of an eloquent, well-educated Jew named Apollos who loved and followed God with his whole heart, as well as he knew how. However, he did not possess the full understanding of truth!

“Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed, for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus.” –Acts 18:24-28 (ESV)

We see in this passage how two apostolic believers saw that Apollos meant well, but did not have the full understandings he needed. So,

they took him aside and taught him the fullness of the doctrine. There are many Christians today who are in the same position as Apollos. Many have simply not been taught the full truth regarding the basic doctrines, but yet truly do love the Lord and strive to do right. The key in this situation was that Apollos was teachable. He allowed himself to recognize that there was more that he didn't know. It wasn't that everything he thought he knew was wrong, he just needed a more complete and perfect understanding. Apollos allowed Aquila and Priscilla to lead him to a fuller understanding of truth.

There are two main Biblical concepts that are fundamental in the plan of God concerning humanity – both of which are commonly not taught correctly in mainstream churches today. First, it is God's desire that men come to the full knowledge of who He is. In other words, it is God's desire that your concept of Him is in fact correct. How important is this? Your eternal life apparently depends on it! This is made clear in the following passages...

“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”
–John 17:3

“I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.”
–John 8:24

So, we can see the importance of the correct understanding of who Jesus Christ actually was!

The second concept that we must understand (and obey) involves our salvation. Since the primary purpose of Jesus coming to Earth in the flesh was to “seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10), then the fundamental doctrine of salvation is crucial. It is God’s desire that none should die in their sins, but that all would receive salvation!

“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” -2 Peter 3:9

“Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.” -1 Timothy 2:4

So, two of the most critical doctrines that make up the foundation of basic Christian truth are properly understanding the nature of God, as well as properly understanding the gospel plan of salvation. Recognizing the importance of these two concepts, it is not surprising that they have been repeatedly attacked and distorted over the millennia. It is astonishing to realize that the vast majority of those who follow some form of Christianity do not have a clear understanding of the two most basic of all Christian doctrines! This study will endeavor to reveal the truth of God regarding these two issues more perfectly.

The Nature Of God

Introduction

We will now begin to plunge right into one of the most misunderstood aspects in all of Christianity. Understanding the true Biblical nature of God is critical for all followers of Jesus. The fundamental principle established in the Old Testament and revealed and fulfilled in the New Testament is the understanding that God is one and indivisible (called monotheism). This teaching was instituted in the Old Testament in the name Yahweh, which comes from a verb that means “to be” or “to live.” In Exodus 3:14, it is translated, “I AM WHO I AM,” which implies Him as the “the self-existing one.” In the New Testament, this same Yahweh took on a body of flesh and revealed Himself to man as Jesus (Hebrew = Yeshua, the contraction of Yehoshua), which literally means “Yahweh saves.”

-“Expository Dictionary of Bible Words,” ed. by Stephen D. Renn, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005, pp. 436-440, 533.

As we go through this study, you will be able to see that this Yeshua (Jesus), was literally the one God Almighty, manifested in flesh as a man, coming to save humanity from sin! This was the simple understanding of the New Testament church. And the Holy Ghost (or Holy Spirit) was simply understood as being His Spirit “in action,” poured out upon the believers on the Day of Pentecost. It was the Spirit of Jesus that would abide in the heart of the Christian.

The early church did not recognize any distinctions between “god persons,” but instead understood God as one “person” who manifested Himself in flesh in the Incarnation. In this sense, they understood that one “God person” had revealed Himself in flesh as a “man person” in order to perform the redemption of mankind. But they had no belief in a distinction between multiple “persons” within God. This simple belief in the early church is referred to by scholars as Modalism, or Modalistic Monarchianism (a term we will explain in detail further ahead). Today, this belief often called “Oneness,” meaning the oneness, singleness, or indivisibility of God’s nature.

Unfortunately, very early on in church history, Paul’s (Acts 20:29-30) expectation of “wolves” coming into the church and perverting the truth was realized in many ways – but maybe most dramatically in the departure from this Biblical understanding of God’s nature. In the centuries following the Apostolic era, there arose a number of deviant teachings that evolved over time into two particularly prominent belief systems: Arianism and Trinitarianism, the latter of which eventually became the mainstream view of the Godhead throughout most of Christian history. Further ahead in our study, we will discuss in depth this historical departure from the original belief of the Apostolic church.

But for now, let’s back up for a moment in order to zoom out our perspective and understand the broad landscape of religious belief on this topic...

As we mentioned, monotheism refers to the belief in one God. The word monotheism comes from two Greek words: monos (meaning single or one), and theos (meaning God).

-<https://www.learnreligions.com/what-is-monotheism-4079967> (Retrieved 3/10/22)

Three of the world's major religions claim a belief in monotheism: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Those who do not accept monotheism generally fall under one of four alternatives:

- Atheists, who deny the existence of God
- Agnostics, who are unsure of the existence of God, or do not believe that God's existence is known or knowable
- Pantheists, whose belief equates God with the forces of nature and the universe
- Polytheists, who believe in more than one God

Within polytheism, there is Ditheism, which is a belief in two gods, as well as Tritheism, the belief in three gods.

But within those that label themselves as "Christian," there are several opposing beliefs concerning the nature of the Godhead, or the nature of God. Trinitarianism is the doctrine that says that there are three distinct "persons" in the Godhead, making up one being. These persons are understood to be God the Father, God the Son (incarnate as Jesus Christ), and God the Holy Spirit, each being co-equal, co-eternal, and co-essential.

-<https://www.catholic.com/encyclopedia/trinity> (Retrieved 4/20/21)

If you are a Christian today, you are likely a Trinitarian “by default.” You probably have never even thought much about it. In fact, you may not even realize that there are other beliefs about God’s nature. You also may not be aware that Trinitarianism was not the earliest Christian view concerning the Godhead – but rather, arose and came to dominance in the centuries following the Apostolic era, an era characterized by a dramatic falling away from doctrinal truth. As mentioned, we will delve more deeply into these historical truths further ahead in our study.

So, Trinitarianism claims a belief in three distinct “God-persons,” but also claims these three are “one” in the Godhead. In other words, Trinitarians claim to be monotheists. Oneness theologian David Bernard notes the following regarding this...

“Within the ranks of trinitarianism, one can discern two extreme tendencies. On the one hand, some trinitarians emphasize the unity of God without having a carefully developed understanding of what is meant by three distinct persons in the Godhead. On the other hand, other trinitarians emphasize the threeness of the trinity to the point that they believe in three self-conscious beings, and their view is essentially tritheistic.”

-David K. Bernard, “The Oneness of God,” Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press, 2000, p. 14.

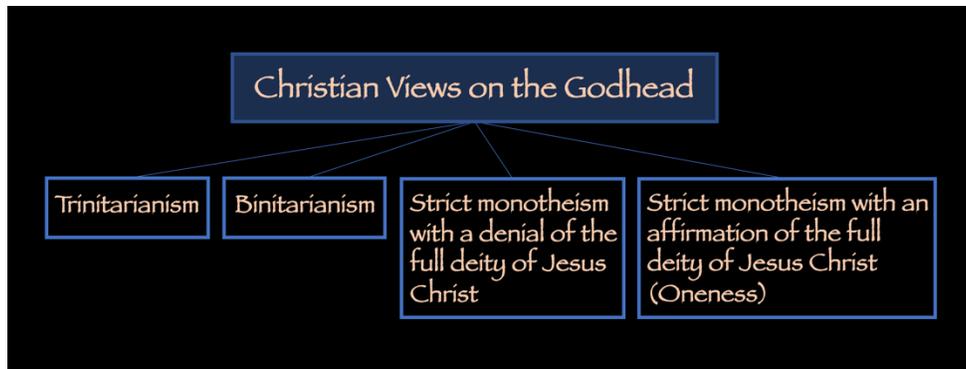
Similar to Trinitarianism is another doctrine called Binitarianism, which leaves out the Holy Ghost as a distinct “divine person,” instead maintaining a belief in two “god-persons” in the Godhead.

There are then Christians who believe that these doctrines of Trinitarianism and Binitarianism undercut and contradict the

unwavering monotheism of the Bible. These Christians disagree with the notion that the Godhead can be subdivided into multiple “god-persons.” These strict Christian monotheists essentially fall into two classes – both of which we’ve already mentioned.

In one camp, there are those who claim a belief in one God, but do so to the extent that they more or less deny the full deity of Jesus Christ. The most well-known belief in ancient church history that falls within this category is Arianism, which relegated Jesus’ true nature to the position of a created being, making Him essentially a demi-god. In this way, they end up denying the full divinity of Jesus. The modern group called the Jehovah’s Witnesses would be a current representation of this belief.

A second camp within strict Christian monotheism believes in one God, but also believes in Jesus Christ as being the fullness of the Godhead manifested (or Incarnate) in human form. Instead of viewing Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as being distinct, divine “god-persons,” they understand them as being labels of different manifestations, modes, roles, relationships, or offices that the one God has used in relationship with humanity in order to bring about His plan for the redemption of man. These believers are the Modalists, or the Modalistic Monarchians of ancient church history, but today are often called Oneness believers.



Now that we have a better understanding of the panorama of views on this subject, we will begin to focus our attention on the only thing that actually matters: what the Word of God has to say about it. The first half of this study on Christian doctrine (The Nature Of God) will cover this subject.

In our search to better understand the nature of God, we will begin by looking at the Old Testament in order to understand the foundational doctrines revealed to the ancient Hebrews. It is imperative for us to recognize that the purpose of the Old Testament Mosaic Law was to lead to the knowledge and recognition of Christ as being the fulfillment of what that Law pointed towards!

“Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.” –Galatians 3:24

The significance of that understanding is that we cannot expect to get a different fundamental teaching of the Godhead once we reach the New Testament. Everything in the New Testament will be predicated upon the foundational understanding of God that was established in the Old Testament.

So, let us now begin to take a look into the Old Testament in order to understand the foundation of our understanding regarding the nature of God. We will begin, of course, in Deuteronomy 6:4, which was the foundational Scripture for understanding God's nature as He revealed it to the ancient Hebrews.

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord:”

–Deuteronomy 6:4

This, in Judaism, is known as the “Shema,” (after the first word of the phrase in Hebrew) and is a declaration of the belief in one God. This belief in one God characterized the beliefs of the Old Testament Jews, and was their most precious truth. A few verses later in this chapter, God emphasizes the importance of this teaching by commanding that these verses be not only in their hearts (Verse 6), and taught to their children throughout the day (Verse 7), but also be bound on their hands and foreheads (Verse 8) and written on the posts and gates of their houses (Verse 9). This command is obeyed by modern Jews in the practice of binding tefillin (or phylacteries) on their left forearms and on their foreheads when they pray; and by placing a mezuzah in their doorways. Tefillin are small boxes that are tied to their bodies, while mezuzot (plural) are small cylindrical containers – both having rolled or folded up paper scrolls of the Shema inside.

The Old Testament is full of verses that emphatically affirm strict monotheism and teach the numerical oneness and aloneness of God. We will discuss many of these as we continue.

This concept of one God was not changed in the New Testament. The New Testament records the birth, life, ministry, death, burial, resurrection and ascension of the Messiah, promised throughout the Old Testament. It presents Jesus Christ as that Messiah, and identifies Him as being the same Yahweh of the Old Testament, simply manifested (or Incarnate) in a human body. He is never described as being only partially God. He is never described as being a lesser God. He is never described as being a different or distinct person from Yahweh, or a distinct person within Yahweh (if such a thing was even possible).

In fact, the New Testament never refers to Jesus as “God the Son” as He is often called by Trinitarians. He is only ever called the Son of God, who was in fact, the God of the Old Testament incarnate in a body of flesh, coming to become a sacrifice for humanity. The fact that the entire Godhead (not just one third, if that were even possible) was present in Jesus Christ is clearly proclaimed by the apostle Paul in the following passage...

“For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.”
-Colossians 2:9

This verse literally declares that all of what we know of or consider being Yahweh was present in the bodily form of Jesus. Now, it would have been sufficient for Paul to simply have said, “For in him dwelleth the Godhead bodily.” The word Godhead (Strong’s #G2320) by definition means, the fullness or essence of God, or the state of being God.

-Joseph Thayer, "Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament," Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2015, p. 288.

It would have been more than sufficient for Paul to have also said "For in him dwelleth the fulness of the Godhead bodily." He added the word "fullness" even though fullness is already implied in the definition of the word Godhead. But, if that wasn't enough, Paul added a third confirmation of this by further adding the word "all." He went to great lengths to make clear for all readers that Jesus was in fact God in the fullest and most complete way you can imagine Him being!

We will seek to explore the nature of the Godhead, as the principles are laid down in the Old Testament and then revealed in Jesus Christ in the New.

As we go on, it will become clear that God has never revealed Himself as being composed of three distinct "god-persons" (Father, Son, Holy Ghost), as the doctrine of the Trinity teaches. Rather, He has revealed Himself in many different roles or relationships at different times in order to accomplish what needed to be done for humanity (this includes more than just three!). So, He revealed Himself as a Father to a world that He created. He revealed Himself as a Son in order to redeem a fallen world back to Himself. He revealed Himself as the Holy Ghost in order to interact with mankind whom He had redeemed.

Three relationships, but the same God are all in focus here! The key is to understand that these roles are not eternal and pre-existent in the essence of who God is. In other words, these are not three

distinct divine entities each intrinsically imprinted with one of these identities. Instead, they are simply describing God's different relationships toward humanity. They are different way He has manifested Himself to us. It would be incredibly misguided to classify the God who has existed outside of time for all of eternity, according to the way He chose to relate to humanity for the past six thousand years of human history. We cannot restrict the eternal God to these relationships. Why would a distinct person of "God the Son" have existed for all eternity when humanity wasn't created until six thousand years ago? The entire purpose of the manifestation of the Son, was in reference to His incarnation as a genuine man in order to accomplish the redemption of man. These three relationships are functional manifestations of the one God in relationship to man.

For example, picture a man who is a father, a son, and a brother all at the same time. Those are simply different relationships that he has to different people simultaneously or at different times – yet, he is obviously only one person (not three). Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are terms of relationship.

There was a time when this hypothetical man was not a father. There may have been a time when he was not a brother. It would be quite narrow-minded for the man's children to imply that their father was an eternal father. The children would only be speaking from their own timeframe of experience, as if the father didn't exist as a general human being prior to their birth. It would be attaching the man's true nature and identity to the children.

But that is exactly what Trinitarians do with God! They claim that the roles and relationships God has used to interact with mankind were actually eternal (part of His nature) – yet they can't, for example, explain why there would need to be a "Son of God" prior to humanity's need for the Incarnation. And instead of seeing them as relationships, they split God into three "god-persons" who they claim somehow exist within one God.

To try to subdivide God in His eternal nature according to human labels is misguided to say the least. Again, these titles (Father, Son, Holy Ghost), are simply relationships to mankind that God has used throughout the history of mankind in order to deal with mankind! Scripture never conveys the idea of a "family of god persons," (which in actuality is a pagan concept) and this was never the foundational understanding of God revealed to the ancient Hebrews.

Instead, God's numerical oneness was emphasized clearly and repeatedly throughout the Old Testament – laying the foundational understanding for how we should view God's progressive revelation as the Incarnate Messiah in the New Testament. The one God was manifest in the flesh as the Christ – and from everything we witness in the writings of the New Testament, this is clearly how the Jewish apostles and early church understood it. As we will see later on in this study, the doctrine of the Trinity was a much later development that was not even hinted at until long after all of the apostles and New Testament authors were dead.

The Oneness Of God

In the previous section, we began to discuss the foundational view of God laid down in the Old Testament. The oneness of God is a teaching persistent throughout the Scriptures to the degree that it would exclude the possibility of multiple persons. Understanding the New Testament is dependent upon utilizing the correct context of interpretation.

One cannot interpret the New Testament through the lenses of 4th century Greek philosophy and Gnosticism (to be discussed later in this study) – which we will demonstrate the Trinity doctrine to have arisen from. One must instead begin with the concepts of God laid down in the Old Testament and expounded upon in the New. Throughout a comprehensive study of the Bible, you will find consistent emphasis on the oneness of God expressed in the strongest possible language. This language stresses not only the unity of composite attributes, but also a sense of absolute numerical oneness. We will examine some of these examples in this section....

The following are just several examples of numerous passages that firmly teach the singleness, aloneness, and numerical oneness of God...

“Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.

I, even I, am the Lord; and beside me there is no saviour.”

-Isaiah 43:10-11

“Thus saith the Lord the King of Israel, and his redeemer the Lord of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God.”

-Isaiah 44:6

“Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any.”

-Isaiah 44:8

“Thus saith the Lord, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the Lord that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself;”

-Isaiah 44:24

“I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me.”

-Isaiah 45:5

“To whom will ye liken me, and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be like?”

-Isaiah 46:5

“Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me,”

-Isaiah 46:9

These verses express that there is one God in the most absolute sense you could think of the phrase “one God.” They consistently use phrases such as “alone,” “by myself,” “none else,” and “none like me.” This unwavering stance on God’s oneness acts as our foundational understanding for our further investigation of God’s nature as revealed in the New Testament. We will find that the New Testament later reveals that Jesus Christ is the revelation of this one God!

God Is A Spirit

Next, it is vital for us to understand some of the basic attributes of God. In His natural essence, God is a spirit being. What is a spirit? Merriam-Webster defines a spirit in this context as a supernatural being.

-<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/spirit> (Retrieved 3/11/22)

In other words, a spirit is a being that has no physical body. Human beings cannot physically see or touch a spirit being. The Bible is clear that God is a spirit...

“God is a Spirit” –John 4:24a

“Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:” –Colossians 1:15

“Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.”
-1 Timothy 1:17

God, as a spirit being, is not limited to the dimensional restrictions of physical created beings but rather exists everywhere simultaneously. We understand this quality of God as being termed omnipresence (meaning He is present everywhere at all times). The following passages describe the omnipresence of God.

“For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or

principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:
And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.”

-Colossians 1:16-17

In this passage, when God is described as being “before all things,” it is not so much talking about pre-existing things in a linear way, or a timeline – but rather, it means that no matter where you go in the universe, He will be right there before you, or in front of you. He is present before (in front of) all things. It speaks of His omnipresence.

“Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off?
Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord.”

-Jeremiah 23:23-24

“But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?” -1 Kings 8:27

Rather than God being “in the universe,” the correct understanding is that the universe is in God! But when physicists speak of space or time, they never speak of them separately, as they understand space and time are connected. They refer to it as “space-time.” Isaiah 57:15 tells us God “inhabits eternity”, meaning that He transcends time and space as He is eternal. In other words, He exists outside of the dimensionality of time and space altogether.

Science has now inferred that as many as ten or more dimensions may exist.

-<https://www.universetoday.com/48619/a-universe-of-10-dimensions/>
(Retrieved 1/20/18)

We understand the realm of the spirit as being extra dimensional to, or outside of, the four physical dimensions we move in (length, width, height and time). While the additional dimensions are all around us, we in our current fallen state are limited to these four dimensions.

Because mankind exists as beings limited to movement in the four physical dimensions, it is obviously impossible to crucify a being that is not a physical being. This is one reason why it was necessary for God to prepare a physical human body for Himself, as a spirit, to inhabit, in order to successfully present Himself as a sacrifice for our sins.

“Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me:”
–Hebrews 10:5

This passage grammatically indicates that the body of Jesus did not pre-exist somehow, but rather was just as we would expect: He was literally brought into existence as a physical man through His mother Mary. The humanity of Jesus Christ was literal. He was a real human being in order to be an effective sacrifice for human beings. You cannot Biblically say (as Trinitarians do), that Jesus pre-existed as a Son separate from His humanity, which we know only came at literal human birth. What makes the Son, the Son, is literally His humanity. The manifestation of the Son, though foreknown and prophesied of

beforehand, came into being at the Incarnation. The Bible never speaks of the Son separate from the Incarnation.

For this reason, we understand Jesus not as an “eternal son,” but rather as the eternal God manifesting Himself as a Son in relationship to humanity in order to die as a sacrifice to redeem us back to Him. We will discuss this in more depth further ahead.

Jesus Was A Genuine Man

It is of critical importance for us to recognize the reality of the Incarnation in the sense that Jesus was a genuine human. The Latin verb *incarnare* meant “to make flesh.” When we say that Jesus Christ is God “incarnate,” we mean that the Almighty God took on a fleshly, bodily form. However, when this happened in the womb of Mary, Jesus’ earthly mother, He did not stop being deity – nor was He limited in space to the human body of Jesus. Although God was made manifest in a fully human experience, He retained His status as God. As we read in a previous section, Scripture tells us that He was all the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Col. 2:9). In other words, He was not just a “second person” of a Trinity. He was all the fullness of the Godhead in flesh.

The metaphysical mechanics of how Jesus is able to be both man and God simultaneously is in some sense a mystery, but is nevertheless clearly and repeatedly stated in Scripture. David Bernard writes...

“It is apparent that Jesus was human in will, mind, spirit, soul, and body, but it is equally apparent that He had the fullness of the Godhead resident in His flesh. From our finite human view, humanity and deity were inseparably joined in His one Spirit.”

-Bernard, “The Oneness of God,” p. 92.

The idea of the Incarnation is uncompromisingly essential to Christianity and is shared by almost all churches and denominations that call themselves Christian. And yet, most problems in people’s minds concerning the Godhead come from this great mystery. While it is true that, like we said, we may not be able to fully comprehend

exactly how the miraculous conception – the union of God and man – took place in Mary’s womb, we can accept it by faith.

The Almighty God was incarnate (meaning personified, manifested, or embodied) as a man. The following are just several of many verses that clearly state Jesus was God manifested in flesh as a man...

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”

-John 1:1 and 14

“Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God:”

-1 John 4:2

“For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.”

-2 John 2:7

“Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know:” –Acts 2:22

“Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.”
-Hebrews 2:17

“Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.” –Acts 17:31

“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;” –1 Timothy 2:5

“But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.” –Romans 5:15

So, we can clearly see from this sampling of passages that the Bible is clear in its teaching that Jesus Christ was God come in the flesh as a genuine man.

There has never been a mystery as to “persons” in the Godhead, as Trinitarians often claim. As we will show throughout this study, the Bible clearly states that there is only one God, and this is easy for all to understand. The only mystery (meaning a previously unknown truth now revealed) about the Godhead is how God could come in flesh. In other words, how Jesus could be both God and man from a metaphysical standpoint.

But the Bible tells us even more about Jesus' human experience as a genuine man...

- Jesus was conceived in the womb and was born (Luke 2:7).
- He experienced normal aging (Luke 2:40).
- He had natural physical needs (John 19:28).
- He had human emotions (Matthew 26:38).
- He routinely prayed to God (Matthew 14:23, et al.).
- He learned (Luke 2:52).
- He died a physical death (Luke 23:46).
- And He was resurrected with a glorified physical body that could be touched (Luke 24:39).

Jesus was human in every way, except for sin. He lived a completely sinless life (Hebrews 4:15), showing that He was not only a man, but was actually the perfect man – the only perfect human to ever have lived.

When God took on the form of a human, His deity did not change. He did not become “less God” than before, nor was He a demi-god. Rather, in the Incarnation, the Almighty God, as a man, humbled

Himself by laying aside His glory and privileges (Philippians 2:6–8). But God can never stop being God because He is immutable (Hebrews 13:8) and infinite (Revelation 1:8). If Jesus stopped being fully God for even a split second, all life would instantly die, as all things are held together by Him (Colossians 1:17).

So, the Biblical understanding of the Incarnation says that Jesus, while remaining fully God, also became fully man in order to die as the perfect sacrifice for our sins – and although we may not be able to explain the mechanics of it, we can accept this mystery by faith through the revelation of God's Word which has been made known to us today.

Jesus Is God

The fact that Jesus is God is as firmly established in Scripture as the fact that God is one. The Bible teaches us that Jesus is fully God and fully human. In the last section, we discussed how clear Scripture is that Jesus was a genuine human. But we now will discuss how equally clear Scripture is that Jesus is God.

The Bible clearly teaches the deity of Christ by presenting His fulfillment of numerous Old Testament prophecies (Isaiah 7:14; Psalm 2:7), His eternal existence as God (John 1:1-3; John 8:58), His miraculous virgin birth (Luke 1:26-31), His miracles (Matthew 9:24-25), His authority to forgive sin (Matthew 9:6), His acceptance of worship (Matthew 14:33), His ability to predict the future (Matthew 23-25), and His resurrection from the dead (Luke 24:36-39). The writer of Hebrews tells us Jesus is superior to angels (Hebrews 1:4-5) and angels are to worship Him (Hebrews 1:6).

So, the Bible is clear in its teaching that Jesus is God manifest in flesh. But no matter how clear it is, you will undoubtedly come across people who make the statement that, "Jesus never claimed to be God," or "the Bible never claims Jesus was God." Let's go through a sampling of verses here and see for ourselves how clear Scripture is on this. The following are just several of many verses we can look to that state Jesus is God...

One of the most powerful proofs that Jesus is God is found in the Messianic prophecy of Isaiah 9:6...

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” –Isaiah 9:6

All Christians agree that a child being born and a son being given refers clearly to the Incarnation. But many don't recognize how clear this passage is in its declaration that this coming Messianic Child and Son would also be “the mighty God” and “the everlasting Father”! In other words, the Son that was given was the everlasting Father manifested in flesh.

Another astounding proof is found in another Messianic prophecy in Isaiah, in which the prophet declared that the Messiah would be called Immanuel, that is, God with us in the flesh (Isaiah 7:14). The following is Matthew's quotation of this prophecy in applying it to Jesus...

“Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.” –Matthew 1:23

So, it is clear that this Messianic child would be brought forth as a Son that would be “God with us” in the flesh.

The following passage in 2 Peter clearly describes Jesus as our God and Savior...

“To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ”

-2 Peter 1:1

The next passage in John traces the divine origin or genealogy of Jesus...

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us,”

-John 1:1, 14

We're clearly told that the Word was God, and then the Word became flesh in the Incarnation. We will discuss this passage in more depth further ahead, as some have developed incorrect understandings of what exactly “the Word” means.

In the following passage, the Jews demonstrate their comprehension of Jesus' claims to be God in flesh. Their reaction makes this clear, as they desired to kill Him in response to His claim...

“Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.” -John 5:17-18

In the next passage, Jesus identifies Himself as the “I AM” of the burning bush story in Exodus, in which God appeared to Moses and spoke to Him, calling Himself Yahweh.

“I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye

believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.”

–John 8:24

In the original Greek, the pronoun “he” is not there. The New Testament translators added it for apparent clarity (notice it’s in italics, meaning it was added). Jesus was telling the Pharisees that He was the “I AM,” the Yahweh of the Old Testament, in flesh. Like in the previous passage that we just looked at, if you were to keep reading in this chapter, you would see that the Pharisees finally recognized His claim and again responded by attempting to stone Him. The next verse is the climax of this exchange ...

“Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I Am.” –John 8:58

If the Pharisees missed Jesus’ earlier “I AM” statement, they surely did not miss this one. Like we said, a continued reading of the chapter would show their response to His claim, which is always to try to kill Him. Again, this demonstrates that they certainly understood His claim, yet rejected it due to their unbelief.

The following passage is also similar...

“I and my Father are one.

Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him.

Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?

The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest

thyself God.” –John 10:30-33

Again, Jesus clearly claimed to be God and the Pharisees correctly interpreted His claim, as proven by their response – to try to stone Him for supposed blasphemy – and Jesus never denies this.

In the next passage, Jesus makes yet another “I AM” statement, again identifying Himself as Yahweh in flesh...

“Jesus said to him, “I AM the way, the truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

–John 14:6-7

No one can come to God the Father except through His manifestation as the Son – the chosen Messianic Servant.

The next passage depicts Jesus responding to the disciple Philip’s request that Jesus reveal the Father to them...

“Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?”

–John 14:9-11

Jesus in no uncertain terms revealed that He in fact was the physical revelation of the Father in the only way they would ever be able to see Him with their physical eyes – as manifested in the flesh.

The next passage reveals the disciple Thomas finally recognizing who

Jesus really was – his Lord and his God, a confession that Jesus did not deny nor dispute.

“And Thomas answered and said to Him, “My Lord and my God!”
-John 20:28

The following passage offers one of the greatest proofs of the identity of Jesus as God manifested in flesh...

“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory.” -1 Timothy 3:16

This passage does not say a “God the Son” person was manifested in the flesh. It states that God was manifested in the flesh.

In the next passage, the apostle Paul again in no uncertain terms declares that Jesus is our “great God and savior”...

“looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.”
-Titus 2:13

The next passage shows the resurrected and ascended Jesus speaking to the churches in Revelation. He makes another “I AM” statement, and then clearly describes Himself as the eternal God...

“I AM the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last..”.. “I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches.” –Revelation 22:13, 16

And in the following excerpt, the apostle Paul again describes the true identity of Jesus as the almighty God...

“That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ:
Which in his times he shall shew,
our Lord Jesus Christ’s appearing, which He will manifest in His own time, He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen.” -1 Timothy 6:14-16

So, the message of Scripture is made clear to us in a number of ways – which we can see clearly from just this small sampling of passages. Jesus was the God of the Old Testament manifest in flesh as a human, but was no less God than He was prior to the Incarnation.

Furthermore, we can tell from these clear and emphatic passages that Jesus is neither a demi-god, nor a subordinate god. Nor is He a second person of a Godhead. The Godhead is the totality of God’s attributes rather than a group of divine god-persons. Instead, as all of these verses (and many more we didn’t include) all demonstrate, Jesus is the fleshly Incarnation of the one indivisible God of the Old Testament.

The Nature Of The Incarnation

Some of the confusion regarding the Trinitarian assertion that Jesus had to be a separate God the Son person distinct from God the Father stems from a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ (for instance, Trinitarians see Jesus praying and incorrectly believe that this logically requires two “god-persons”).

The answer is actually quite simple. In order for Jesus to have been a true sacrifice for humanity, He had to have been a true human. This means that He of necessity had to submit Himself to the full human experience. But in order for Him to have been the one sacrificial offering able to redeem the entire human race for all time, He had to also be fully God. As we've stated numerous times, Jesus was fully God and fully man. David Bernard writes...

“The divine Spirit could be separated from the human body by death, but His humanity was more than a human body, the shell of a human, with God inside. He was human in body, soul, and spirit with the fullness of the Spirit of God dwelling in that body, soul, and spirit. Jesus differed from an ordinary human (who can be filled with the Spirit of God) in that He had all of God's nature within Him. He possessed the unlimited power, authority, and character of God. Furthermore, in contrast to a born-again, Spirit filled human, the Spirit of God was inextricably and inseparably joined with the humanity of Jesus.”

-Bernard, “The Oneness of God,” p. 92.

Some have speculated that a divine nature and a human nature were in some way brought together and fused into one in a way never done before. While the Bible doesn't give us the specifics on this, what it does make clear is simple – Christ was both God and man – but not just a “50/50 mixture.” He was genuinely and fully God and He was genuinely and fully man. As we mentioned earlier, this seems difficult to grasp, and for this reason Paul writes to us regarding the “mystery of godliness” in 1 Timothy 3...

“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness:”

Paul admits that it is difficult to even imagine the concept of the one true God taking on the body of a man. Yet in the same passage, he goes on to explain this mystery to us!

“God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.” -1 Timothy 3:16

Again, it does not say a second divine member of a Trinity was made flesh. It says God was made flesh.

The Jews could never understand how a man could have been God. In fact, this was their reason for wanting to stone Jesus in the following passage...

“The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.” –John 10:33

The Jews didn't understand that they in fact had it backwards! Jesus wasn't a man, making Himself God. He was God who had made Himself a man! The Messiah in fact had to be a true man! In order for the redemption plan to be effective for the salvation of man, the Messianic Savior had to be fully man.

“Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour (to give aid to) them that are tempted.”

–Hebrews 2:17-18

“For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

–Hebrews 4:15-16

One of the most critical concepts you must understand is that in the Incarnation, God the Father manifested Himself as a genuine human being – all God, all man, a mystery in flesh. He entered into His own creation through the most unexpected way possible! He entered through human birth as His creation does!

It is imperative to recognize that when Jesus is pictured in Scripture performing or experiencing human functions such as praying, weeping, learning, etc., it is simply the fact that He was fully human

and underwent a fully human experience, aside from sin. Jesus had a complete, but sinless human nature. Anything we are capable of doing as humans, Jesus also was capable of doing, aside from sin.

So, as a genuine human, we would fully expect Him to pray, for instance. It would be inaccurate for us to explain the fact that Jesus prayed by reasoning two distinct persons in the Godhead, with one “god-person” praying to a second “god-person.” Actually, this argument would contradict Trinitarianism, as it would render one of those two “god-persons” as subordinate to the other. We will discuss this issue of Jesus praying in much greater depth further ahead.

But put simply, as a genuine man, Christ prayed to God. He wasn't praying to God as God, He was praying to God as a genuine man. It was the man who was subordinate to the divine Spirit. Yet at the same time, Jesus could control the weather and forgive sins. Obviously, He was able to do this as God, not as a man. This is no contradiction – it's simply a mystery in the sense that we don't fully understand the mechanics of how God and man were brought together – and yet, the Bible is clear on its reality.

Before we go on, we need to emphasize four important points that should serve as aids to properly understanding many of the commonly misunderstood passages. We will keep these points in mind as we go on, and will at times revisit them.

1. In the Bible, when we see an apparent plural in reference to Jesus and God the Father, we should not think of a distinction between multiple “god-persons.” The only distinction of

“persons” is between the deity of God and the humanity of Christ. One God Person and one man person – but that man person is that God Person who became a man person (Immanuel – God with us as a man person – “One God and One mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,” 1 Tim. 2:5).

2. Jesus spoke and acted both as God and as a genuine human, and some statements emphasize one role more than the other. Everything that we can say or do as humans, Jesus could say or do as a human, except that He never sinned. In every way that we can relate to God, Jesus as a man related to God, except that He never needed to repent or be born again. He was God manifested in the flesh.
3. When we see a plural in relation to God and the man Christ, we should understand it from the perspective of Point #1, and as a plurality of roles or relationships to humanity, and not a plurality of preexistent “god-persons.”
4. The New Testament writers had no conception of the doctrine of the Trinity, which was still far in the future. They came from a strict monotheistic Jewish background; one God was the only possibility for them. Some passages may seem “Trinitarian” to us at first glance because Trinitarians through the centuries have used them and interpreted them according to their doctrine. However, to the early church, who had no concept of the future doctrine of the Trinity, these same passages were readily understandable. There was no thought of contradicting either strict monotheism or the deity of Jesus.

Jesus Christ, The Eternal Son Or The Eternal God?

The idea that Jesus pre-existed humanity as an “eternal Son” is nowhere found in Scripture, and frankly is unreasonable to even suggest. Where was Mary before Adam and Eve were created? How could He be a son when His mother wasn’t yet created? The manifestation of the Son cannot be separated from Christ’s human experience. When the Bible speaks of the Son of God, it is always describing God in His redemptive role as a genuine human. Obviously, this did not begin until actual conception.

Though the role of the Son had always existed in the mind of God, the actual Incarnation had not occurred until Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Jesus preexisted humanity as the one true God, but had not yet entered into the Son relationship with humanity. He did not preexist as a divine “Son person.” Again, whenever the Son is mentioned in Scripture, it is always a reference to the Incarnation – and never to a preexistent “god-person.” The Incarnation of course was an event that took place at a predetermined point in time...

“But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,

To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.” –Galatians 4:4-7

Here we see that the relationship of the Son was a timed-release event in the mind of God! This passage in Galatians also makes it clear that the Son needed the woman to be formed. The sending forth of His Son refers to the implantation of genetic seed by the Holy Ghost in Mary's womb and the subsequent physiological process of birthing. The mechanism by which Jesus was "sent" into the world was merely the human birthing process. So, the Son was "made of a woman," and was not eternally preexistent. The manifestation, or role, or relationship, or office of the Son came into being at a specific point in time for a specific purpose.

John 3:16 also tells us that the Son was "begotten," or in other words, not eternally preexistent...

"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." –John 3:16

Grammatically, "begotten," means that Jesus had a beginning in His role as Son. Begotten is the past participle of beget, which literally means either to bring a child into existence by the process of reproduction, or to give rise to or bring about.

-<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/beget> (Retrieved 2/05/18)

At a specific point in time, God caused Jesus' conception in Mary's womb. Jesus couldn't exist as a son prior to His birth as a son through His mother Mary. Again, we cannot separate Jesus' humanity from His role as the Son. Although God exists outside of the dimension of time, humans don't! This action of the Incarnation was in

fact regulated by time, as Jesus was to be a real human entering into a real human experience at the appointed time, which He had established beforehand!

This is again reinforced in the following prophetic Messianic passage from the Psalms, which is subsequently quoted several times in the New Testament...

“I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.”
–Psalm 2:7

This passage is clear that the Messiah was begotten at a certain point in time, referred to as “this day.” The passage is then quoted in Acts and Hebrews, being applied to Jesus’ Incarnation...

“God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.”
–Acts 13:33

“So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee.”
–Hebrews 5:5

Again, these verses imply grammatically that the role and relationship of Jesus Christ as the Son of God had a definite beginning. Clearly, they began with Jesus’ conception in the womb of Mary, as the earlier passage in Galatians explicitly told us that the sending forth of the

Son was accomplished by His being “made” or conceived and brought to gestation, by a woman.

This is supported also in the following passage in John 5, which clearly denies an eternally preexistent Son...

“For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself;” -John 5:26

There was a time when the Son did not have “life in himself,” because He was not yet created. He did not come into substantial being until His conception in the womb of Mary. This is an especially difficult passage for Trinitarians to deal with. The Father is described as having life in Himself, and giving life to the Son at a specific point in time. This would be an awkward saying if we were to understand the Son to already have had life as an eternally preexistent “god-person.” In other words, how can you be given something you already have? Clearly, the Son’s lack of preexistent life is shown in contradistinction to the fact that the Father (or God) did have preexistent life. This is the whole point of the passage.

Hebrew 1:5 is yet another proof-text that shows the Father and Son relationship was not eternally preexistent, but instead would come into being at a then-future point in time. The writer here quotes an Old Testament Messianic prophecy from the Psalms...

“I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son”
-Hebrews 1:5

This pre-incarnation prophetic quotation says that the Father and Son relationship would commence at some specific time in the future. This would be impossible to say if the relationship was eternally preexistent, as Trinitarians would have us to believe.

In addition, Revelation 3:14 refers to Jesus as being “the beginning of the creation of God” ...

“And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;” -Revelation 3:14

Obviously, we know Jesus was not physically created first in terms of linear order. Instead, this passage should be interpreted to mean that Christ is preeminent in creation, and that although His creation did not take place until His conception in the womb of Mary, it was an event that was predestined from eternity past in the plan of God. But the overall point here is that an eternally preexistent being cannot have a created beginning! Commenting on this verse and its similarity in usage to John 1:1, Oneness theologian Steven Ritchie states...

“It is nonsensical to believe that the Son of God always had a timeless existence as a Son because the Son could not have been ‘the beginning of the creation of God’ without having an actual beginning. Jesus as a Son is called, ‘the beginning of the creation of God’ in the same sense that John 1:1 says, ‘In the beginning was the Word.’ The Greek word ‘logos’ simply means ‘the expressed thought’ of God which God spoke at the beginning of creation.”

-Steven Ritchie, "The Glory of the Son," (https://68fec923-abea-4e0d-9985-311fbee51d98.filesusr.com/ugd/Od23c2_5a99c2b43d264cc394b6e616f1b99ec2.pdf - Retrieved 1/21/22))

Although many passages prophetically refer to the existence of Jesus before His human life began, the Bible does not teach us that He existed separate and distinct from the Father. On the contrary, in His deity He is the Father and Creator. The Spirit of Jesus existed from all eternity because He is God Himself. The Spirit of Jesus was that same Spirit that "moved upon the face of the waters" in Genesis 1:2.

However, the humanity of Jesus, and therefore the Son manifestation, did not exist before the Incarnation, except as a plan in the mind of God. Therefore, we can say the Spirit of Jesus preexisted the Incarnation (as God), but we cannot say the Son preexisted the Incarnation in any substantial sense. The passage mentioned a short while ago, John 1:1 and 14 is a good summary of the Biblical teaching on the preexistence of Jesus...

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." -John 1:1, 14

First, we should recognize that the term "the Word" (logos - Strong's #G3056) refers to the thought, plan, expression, or mind of God.

-Marvin R. Vincent, "Word Studies in the New Testament," Vol. 2, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1887, pp. 25-33.

Again, Steven Ritchie comments:

“Therefore the Son existed as the impersonal expressed thought (Logos) of God rather than being a living personal Son ‘at the beginning of the creation of God.’”

-Ibid.

In other words, Jesus existed from all eternity as God. The plan of the future Sonship existed with God from the beginning, in the mind and plan of God (the Word). The universe itself was created with this predestined Sonship in mind. We’re told this in passages such as Hebrews 1:2 and Ephesians 3:9...

“Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;”

-Hebrews 1:2

“And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:” -Ephesians 3:9

What does this “creation by the Son” mean? These verses describe the eternal divine Spirit that was in the Son (the deity that was later incarnated as the Son) as the Creator. But the other half of the answer is that, like we said, the universe itself was created with this predestined Sonship in mind. In other words, God created the world with the foreknowledge and certainty of His plan for the Incarnation and redemption of man through the Son.

It is in this sense that He used the Sonship to create the world. He predicated the entire creation on the future manifestation of the Son. Thus, Romans 5:14 states that Adam was the figure of Him that was to come, namely Christ. Obviously, God had the Son already in mind when He created Adam.

Furthermore, this is also what is meant in Revelation 13:8, which describes the Lamb (or the Son) being slain before the foundations of the earth. Of course, this did not literally take place before the creation, but it refers to the future certainty of a predestined plan in the mind of God. God lives outside of the dimensions of time, and therefore Romans 4:17 tells us that He calls things that are not as though they were. In other words, He can regard things that do not exist as though they do exist. It's a reference to future certainty.

This is also how the man Christ could pray, "O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" in John 17:5. And as Romans 8:29-32 tells us, God had foreordained (or predestinated) the Son and the future plan of redemption. This plan was in God's mind at creation and was necessary for the creation to be successful. Therefore, He created the world by the Son. Ultimately, the Word became flesh – the expression of God the Father in human form in the Incarnation.

This is the correct Biblically consistent way to understand the John 1:1 passage ("In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word was made flesh"). But some get confused on the word "with" in this passage ("the Word was with God"). Trinitarians believe this requires two "god-persons" in eternal

preexistence. Let's take a moment to clarify any misunderstanding regarding this.

First, let's recall the definition of "the Word." We said it refers to the thought, plan, expression, or mind of God. A man's thoughts, plans, and mind are part of him – they cannot be a separate "person." That is how the Word could be "with" God and at the same time be God Himself.

Secondly, we should note that the Greek word "pros" (Strong's #G4314), translated here as "with," is translated as "pertaining to" in Hebrews 2:17 and 5:1. So, the Word was with God in the sense of belonging to God and not in the sense of a distinct person besides God.

Furthermore, if "God" in John 1:1 means "God the Father" (which it does, and all Trinitarians will agree it does), then the Word is not a different person, for the next phrase clearly says, "and the Word was God" – showing no distinction of persons.

Note: We will discuss this concept of "the Word" further in a later section as well.

So, we can see that the Bible does not portray the Sonship as preexisting in eternity as Trinitarians believe, but rather, Jesus, as the eternal God, foreknew and foreordained in His plan the future role of the Incarnation. This is neatly summarized in 1 Peter 1:20...

“Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,” -1 Peter 1:20

In other words, Christ only preexisted as a foreordained plan in the mind of God, but was substantially manifested in the Incarnation.

Let us now apply these concepts to various verses of Scripture that are often misunderstood to speak of the preexistence of the Son, and see how they instead emphatically teach the deity of Jesus as the preexistent God of the Old Testament...

- “Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.” –John 8:58

We can easily understand this to be a reference to the preexistence of Jesus as the God of the Old Testament. Jesus used the “I AM” statement to identify Himself as the Yahweh that had revealed Himself to Moses and the Israelites through the burning bush encounter in Exodus.

- “What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?” –John 6:62

We can understand this passage in the same way as the previous one, with Jesus using the phrase “Son of man” as the equivalent of “I” or “me,” rather than to emphasize His humanity. In other words, He wasn’t in heaven (“where he was before”) as the Son of man, since He hadn’t yet been born as a Son of man – but rather, He was there as the preexistent God.

- “I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.”
–John 16:28

This too, refers to His preexistence as God. The divine nature of Jesus was God the Father, so the Incarnate Christ could rightly say, “I came forth from the Father.”

- “And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.”
–John 17:5

We mentioned this passage a short while back. Again, Jesus spoke of the glory He had as God in the beginning and the predestined glory the Son had in the plan and mind of God. It could not mean that Jesus preexisted with glory as a distinct Son person. We must remember that Jesus was praying, so He was speaking as a man – not as a “god-person.” “God-persons” do not pray. Humans pray. Further, we know the humanity did not preexist the Incarnation, so Jesus was talking about the glory the Son had in the plan of God from the beginning. (This particular passage will be addressed in even greater detail in the later sections entitled [Jesus Is The Yahweh Of The Old Testament Revealed](#), found on page 88 and [The Son’s Predestined Glory](#), found on page 151.)

- Verses describing the Son as being “sent from the Father”:

John 3:17 and 5:30, along with other verses of Scripture, state that the Father sent the Son. Does this mean that Jesus, the Son of God, is a distinct person from the Father? In other words, does the fact that He is being “sent” imply preexistence? We know this is not so because many verses of Scripture clearly teach that God manifested Himself in flesh (2 Corinthians 5:19, 1 Timothy 3:16). He gave of Himself; He did not send someone else. The Son was sent forth from God as a man, not as God: “God sent forth his Son, made of a woman” (Galatians 4:4).

Further, the word “sent” does not imply preexistence of the Son or preexistence of the man. John 1:6 states that John the Baptist was a man sent from God, and we know he did not preexist his conception. Instead, the word “sent” indicates that God appointed the Son for a special purpose. God formed a plan, put flesh on that plan, and then put that plan in operation. God gave the Son a special task, for specific reasons, which we will clearly detail in a later section. Hebrews 3:1 calls Jesus the Apostle of our profession (apostle meaning “one sent” in Greek). Simply put, the sending of the Son emphasized the humanity of the Son and the specific purposes for which the Son was born.

So, we can conclude that the consistent Biblical teaching is that Son was not eternally preexistent, as Trinitarians claim. Instead, whenever the Son is mentioned in Scripture, it is always a reference to the Incarnation – and never to a preexistent “god-person.” The Incarnation of course was an event that took place at a predetermined point in time.

The Word

Although we engaged this topic of “the Word” or the Logos in John 1:1 in some depth in the previous section, we will now look into it some more in order to ensure this is completely understood. John Chapter 1 unmistakably teaches the concept of God manifest in flesh and Jesus as being that God incarnate. It teaches us that the Incarnation was a foreknown and foreordained plan in the mind of God that has a future certainty attached to it. Let’s now read the first 14 verses of this chapter in their entirety...

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

The same was in the beginning with God.

All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

In him was life; and the life was the light of men.

And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.

He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.

That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.

He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the

sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:
Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” –John 1:1-14

As we've mentioned previously, “the Word” (Greek “logos” – Strong’s #G3056) refers to the plan, thought, and/or mind of God (Vincent, pp. 25-33). The Word was not a separate person or a separate god any more than a man’s words, thoughts, or plans are a separate person from him. The Incarnation was a predestined plan – an absolutely certain future event – and therefore it had a reality attached to it that no human thought could ever have. The Word was with God in the beginning and actually was God Himself (as we read in John 1:1), and was not a second “god-person.”

The Word can also refer to the plans or thoughts of God now expressed in the flesh – that is, in the Incarnation. David Bernard says the following about the Greek meaning of “logos”...

“In Greek usage, logos can mean the expression or plan as it exists in the mind of the of the proclaimer – as a play in the mind of a playwright – or it can mean the thought as uttered or otherwise physically expressed – as a play that is enacted on a stage.”

–Bernard, “The Oneness of God,” p. 60.

In other words, when the fullness of time was come, God put His plan into action. He put flesh on that plan in the form of the man Christ Jesus. The Logos becoming flesh is “God’s plan now visibly

expressed or revealed.” This thought is further brought out by Verse 14, which, as we read, says the incarnate Word had the glory as of the only begotten of the Father. And later in Verse 18, which we did not read, it says that the Son has “declared” (or revealed) the Father. So, we can easily understand that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was none other than the Word (or the thoughts, plans, expression, and revelation) of God Himself manifest in flesh. In other words, Jesus was the physical manifestation of God’s predestined plan (the Word).

Like in the previous section, we should again point out that the Greek word “pros” (Strong’s #G4314), translated “with” in Verse 1, is the same word translated as “pertaining to” in Heb. 2:17 and 5:1...

“Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.”
-Hebrews 2:17

“For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins:” -Hebrews 5:1

So then, John 1:1 could be understood to read: “The Word pertained to God and the Word was God,” or “The Word belonged to God and was God.” This makes perfect sense as we recognize how just as our own human thoughts and plans pertain to us, the thoughts and plans of God pertain to Him. The Word was “with” God in the sense of pertaining to God. So, clearly, “the Word” in John 1 expresses the oneness of God and the predestined plan of God as manifest and

revealed in the Incarnation, and in no way distinguishes multiple “god-persons” in preexistent fellowship.

But let’s analyze another common misconception regarding this passage. Commonly, Trinitarians equate “the Word” with meaning “God the Son” in eternal preexistence as a “god-person.” Is this Biblically warranted? Let’s examine this notion, and distinguish “the Word” in its Scriptural usage from the “Son.”

What is the Biblical distinction between the two terms “Word” and “Son” (in this context)? Should they be viewed as equivalent terms, or synonyms? Trinitarians believe so, and have used it that way going back to the first several centuries following the Apostolic era (as we will discuss later on). But there’s a significant distinction that they overlook.

What is this distinction? Put simply: the Word had preexistence as the Word was God (the Father), so we can use this term without reference to humanity. On the other hand, the Son always refers to the Incarnation, and therefore we cannot speak of the Son in the absence of His humanity. Biblically, except as a foreordained plan in the mind of God, the Son did not have preexistence before His conception in the womb of Mary. The Son of God preexisted in thought but not in substance. So, no – “the Word” cannot be equated to the Trinitarian concept of an eternally preexistent “God the Son.”

If this concept is still unclear in your mind, let’s point to a comparative example that should clear up any confusion...

“Who has performed and accomplished it,
Summoning the generations from the beginning?
‘I, the Lord, am the first, and with the last. I am He.’”
-Isaiah 41:4 (NASB)

This passage in Isaiah depicts God saying that He called forth the generations of humanity from the beginning. This is similar to the John 1:1 passage depicting the Word being with God in the beginning. Yet, we would never dream that this passage in Isaiah is claiming that humanity was preexistent. We easily understand it to mean that the generations of mankind were all foreknown to the omniscient God from the beginning – and is just another of many passages we can point to that demonstrate this consistent Biblical usage. You may recall the lengthy list of passages we discussed in the previous section that all consistently demonstrated this.

Steven Ritchie writes the following regarding this passage in Isaiah as being compared with John 1:1...

“Isaiah 41:4 proves that God ‘called forth the generations’ of all human history from ‘the beginning’ of creation. Just like an architect first creates a detailed blueprint before he actually builds a building, so God first pre-created the human time periods of all human history before human time actually began. Therefore, the Son of God and all human generations of world history were already predestined in the mind and plan of God before the world was literally created. This is precisely the meaning of the apostle John when he wrote, ‘In the beginning was the Word (Logos means ‘the expressed thought’ of

God)' in John 1:1. God the Father called forth the Son as a 'That which was from the beginning' before the Son actually existed as a person."

-Steven Ritchie, "The Glory of the Son," (https://68fec923-abea-4e0d-9985-311fbee51d98.filesusr.com/ugd/Od23c2_5a99c2b43d264cc394b6e616f1b99ec2.pdf - Retrieved 1/21/22))

Language like this is consistently used in Scripture, and it always speaks of God's foreordained knowledge and plan – and not actual substantial preexistence.

And so, it should not be difficult for us to understand the clear meaning of "the Word" in John Chapter 1. The Bible consistently and repeatedly uses this same kind of language to refer to the predestinated plan of God that was present with Him from the beginning – most prominently involving His plan for the redemption of man, which would hang entirely on the certainty of the then-future Sonship.

Jesus Christ, The Fullness Of The Godhead In Bodily Form

The Bible is clear that Jesus Christ is not a distinct person from the other assumed “two thirds” of God. Rather, Jesus Christ is the bodily representation of all that makes up God (the Godhead). The Godhead cannot be subdivided into persons plural, but rather refers to the totality of attributes and characteristics that belong to the singular, essential Deity of God. The New Testament is clear in its teaching that Jesus Christ was the physical manifestation of this singular Deity. For example, Paul repeatedly hammers this point home in his letter to the Colossians...

“For in him (Jesus) dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.”
–Colossians 2:9

“For it pleased the Father that in him (Jesus) should all fulness dwell;” –Colossians 1:19

We never find the Bible describing God as consisting of persons plural, but rather see Him expressed as a person singular, with Jesus being the visible expression or image of His singular person...

(Speaking of Jesus) “Who being the brightness of his (God’s) glory, and the express image of his (God’s) person...”
–Hebrews 1:3a

We should pay careful attention to this incredibly clear passage that all by itself easily refutes Trinitarianism. Jesus is spoken of as being the expressed image of God’s singular person in flesh. Although it is

rare that Scripture refers to God as a person at all, we only ever see singular personhood attributed to Him – in other words, only the singular word “person”, and never in the plural form of “persons.” The only place you will ever witness the word “persons” in relation to God is in the writings of Trinitarians – and never in the Bible.

We understand that although Jesus appeared on earth in bodily form, He did not cease to fill the universe simultaneously. This is understood to be the omnipresence of God. God cannot be confined to a body, just as He could not be confined to an earthly house, the Temple in the Old Testament. Though the fullness and totality of what makes up God was present in the body of Jesus Christ, it must be recognized that the entire universe cannot contain God. God is everywhere simultaneously.

This should not be confused with pantheism, which is the belief that God is in everything. It simply means that there is nowhere you can go in the cosmos and find that God is not already there. God is not in the universe; rather, the universe is in God! And yet, all that we think of as God – the totality of the Godhead – was present bodily in Jesus Christ.

God Was Manifested In The Flesh As Jesus

At this point in our study, some of this information may be sounding a bit redundant. Although that may certainly be true, we feel that due to the intensity and prevalence of false teaching in the mainstream Christian church, we need to explore this topic as thoroughly as possible. As is always the case when you are trying to learn a new concept, some repetition is not only helpful, but actually necessary.

In our last section, we alluded to the way Paul, in Colossians, emphasized the singular person of God as being manifest in Christ – as opposed to the Trinitarian notion of only the “second person of the Trinity” being manifest in flesh. This is a major distinction between Trinitarians and those who believe in the Oneness of God. Only Oneness believers actually view Jesus as being “all the fullness of the Godhead” in bodily form. This may seem like a technicality, as all Trinitarians will verbally agree to the belief that Jesus is fully God, but yet it clearly demonstrates how Trinitarian theology (like Jehovah’s Witnesses, and other deviant views) fails to consider Jesus as being fully God to the degree Oneness believers do.

As we also saw, Colossians further states that Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God. Let’s now build upon our understanding. Since God is a Spirit by nature, in order to perform redemption for man, He had to take on the body of a man, which could be crucified. Let’s recognize the clear wording in the following passages...

“Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:

Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:

In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:

Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.”

-Colossians 1:12-17

It clearly says that Jesus is the image, or incarnation, of God (or God the Father) – not the image or incarnation of a “second person in the Godhead,” as Trinitarians claim. We see this again in 1 Timothy 3:16...

“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.”

-1 Timothy 3:16

Jesus Christ was the invisible God (a Spirit) manifested in the flesh. He was the totality of what comprises God's Godhood in flesh.

“No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared (revealed or manifested) him.” –John 1:18

God is a spirit, and is not visible to human eyes. Therefore, by manifesting in physical flesh, He revealed himself visibly to humanity

through the role of the Son. He manifested Himself as the Son. Jesus Christ is not a junior god (like Jehovah's Witnesses believe), nor is He simply "part" of the Godhead (if that were even possible – like Trinitarians believe). He is the totality. And as we saw previously, Hebrews states that He is the express image of the person of God.

"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, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;
Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high:" –Hebrews 1:1-3

Notice the word used is "his," a personal possessive pronoun that is singular rather than plural. In other words, there is only one person in God, and He is visible to humanity only through the man Christ Jesus. This is said again by Paul in 2nd Corinthians...

"In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." -2 Corinthians 4:4

So, although we've taken some time to repeat concepts we've already mentioned earlier in our study, we hope this second look has galvanized your confidence in the unified teaching of the Scriptures – that Jesus Christ is the manifestation of all of what we think of as God, or in other words, the Godhead.

Jesus Was The Father Manifested In Flesh

It is critical to understand the purpose of the gospel of John. You will find that in his gospel, John's overarching goal is to reveal the identity of Jesus Christ. The true identity of Jesus was not role or relationship dependent. Although He came in the role of the Son as a human in order to be our kinsman Redeemer, the identity of Jesus was much deeper and more profound still. This is what John continually sought to give revelation about throughout his book, and is the reason why so many of the passages we refer to in this study are found in his gospel.

Jesus was not "just" the Son. He came in the role of the Son in His incarnate body, but His true identity was that of the fullness of the Godhead (Colossians 2:9). Saying that Jesus was the Son, or Jesus was the Father are acceptable statements, but we must recognize that His true depth of identity was the fullness of the Godhead. The Bible states that the Father was "in" Jesus. In other words, the same essence that makes up the Father infilled the physical body of Jesus. It may be correctly said that Jesus is the Father incarnate. So, in the sense of being composed of the same essence, one may state that Jesus is the Father, Jesus is the Son and Jesus is the Holy Ghost. Technically, we would not say "the Father is the Son," as we recognize those are simply roles/relationships, with the Son always referring to Jesus' humanity/Incarnation. Rather, a more accurate statement would be "Jesus is the true identity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost."

A suitable analogy may be water. Water can exist as a solid, a liquid, and a gas (and as a plasma, but for the sake of this example we will stick with the first three). Though in different forms, the substance is the same. The different forms emerge due to the heat present. Heat may be looked at as representing humanity. Just as water reveals itself differently because of heat, God revealed Himself differently because of humanity. The solid may be similar to the role of the Son, in that it was physical and tangible. Gas may be similar to the role of the Father in that it is invisible, like a spirit. Liquid water may be similar to the Holy Ghost in that it refreshes man and acts upon your mind and emotions. A thirsty man will do just about anything to be filled. Similarly, a man desperate for God will be filled with the Holy Ghost! Jesus also used this analogy of water in John, where He compared the Holy Ghost to rivers of living water.

“He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

(But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)” –John 7:38-39

Next, we will examine a number of passages in which Jesus identifies Himself with the Father, as opposed to being distinct from the Father. Many of these verses so clearly identify their oneness that they would exclude any possibility of distinction of persons. It is interesting that Jesus never preached or taught any doctrine that would align with Trinitarianism, but rather always sought to persuade His followers of His oneness as God.

“And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.

I and my Father are one.” –John 10:30

Here, Jesus first refers to His hand, and then to His Father’s hand. He then refers to Himself and the Father as being one. In other words, the Father’s hand is His hand. In their deity, they are the same being. In the next passage, Jesus speaks of this oneness even more emphatically...

“Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.

Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?

Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.

Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works’ sake.” –John 14:8-11

Jesus in no uncertain terms identified Himself as being the visible manifestation of the Father. This cannot simply be equated with Jesus claiming “oneness of mind” with the Father. Jesus claimed literally “if you’ve seen me, you’ve seen the Father.” If I say, “My wife and I are one in mind and purpose,” that is different from me saying, “If you’ve seen me, you’ve seen my wife.” Obviously, Jesus is making very clear not only oneness of mind and will, but He is emphasizing

that He literally is the only physical representation of the invisible God that we will ever see!

“In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.”

-2 Corinthians 4:4

In the following passage, the disciple Thomas finally receives the revelation of the true identity of the risen Christ...

“The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.

And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.

Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.

And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.”

-John 20:25-28

Here, we see Thomas finally coming to grips with the understanding that Jesus was literally God in the flesh. Coming from a strict Jewish monotheistic background, Thomas exclaimed, “My Lord and My God.” He did not mean a second person of a Trinity, but rather the

Yahweh of the Old Testament revealed in flesh. It is interesting to note that Jesus did not refute this nor correct it!

It is also interesting to notice the abundance of Scripture passages speaking of the roles of God as being fundamental to one, rather than three persons. The following are several examples of this. Notice that the Old Testament verses, which speak of the Father, also identify Him as being the Redeemer, who we know prophetically as Jesus. Let's take a look at some...

“Doubtless thou art our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O Lord, art our father, our redeemer; thy name is from everlasting.” –Isaiah 63:16

“Thus saith the Lord the King of Israel, and his redeemer the Lord of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God.” –Isaiah 44:6

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” –Isaiah 9:6

We are consistently shown that the future Son, the Redeemer, is identified as being the same as the Father, the God of the Old Testament that was known by the ancient Hebrews. So, we consistently find that Jesus was the Father manifested in flesh.

Additional Proofs That Jesus Is The Father Incarnate

Since even Trinitarians will claim to agree that there is one God, and God is the Father, then it should not be difficult to come to the conclusion that if Jesus is God, then Jesus is the Father incarnate. However, we will discuss some additional passages that all clearly lead to that conclusion.

In the previous section, we ended by referencing Isaiah 9:6, which calls Jesus the “everlasting Father.” Is He then an additional Father to God the Father? How many Fathers are there?

“Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?” –Malachi 2:10

“One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” –Ephesians 4:6

If there is truly only one Father, as is stated in these two verses, then if Isaiah 9:6 identifies the Son and the Everlasting Father as being the same person, then it should be quite clear that Jesus must be the Father revealed in the Son. If that is still not good enough, Jesus Christ Himself taught that He was the Father manifest in flesh.

“Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also.” –John 8:19

Then in Verse 24 He continues by stating...

“I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.”

–John 8:24

It cannot be any clearer than this. Interestingly, the word “he” in the phrase “I am he,” is shown in italics, indicating that it was not in the original Greek, but rather added by the translators for supposed clarity. When you remove the “he,” you are left with “I am.” Jesus was identifying Himself as the Father for the Pharisees in the plainest way possible. This phrase “I am” refers to the account of Moses encountering the God of the Old Testament in the burning bush as God called him to lead the people of Israel during the enslavement in Egypt. When asked for His name, God identified Himself simply as “I am” – the basis of the name Yahweh/Jehovah.

“And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them?”

And God said unto Moses, I Am That I Am: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I Am hath sent me unto you.”

–Exodus 3:13-14

As teachers of the law, the Pharisees should have recognized immediately the claim that Jesus was making. However, they initially did not grasp His meaning. So, they then asked Jesus for clarity. He gives it to them in the following verse...

“Then said they unto him, Who art thou? And Jesus saith unto them, Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning.”

–John 8:25

Jesus referred back to the burning bush encounter with Moses as “the beginning,” as that was when He began the progressive revelation of His “name” to Israel as a nation. However, the Pharisees still did not understand the claim He was making! Even if you did not catch the reference to the burning bush in Exodus, Verse 27 takes away all doubt, by plainly stating that He was referring to the Father.

“They understood not that he spake to them of the Father.”

–John 8:27

They still didn’t understand, so Jesus said it another time... (again, the “he” was not included in the original text”).

“Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.” –John 8:28

The next verse then states that when He said these things, many of the Jews who were there believed, though the Pharisees did not and continued to argue with Him.

“As he spake these words, many believed on him.

Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;

And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”
–John 8:31-32

In other words, the fact that these Jews understood Jesus was identifying Himself as the Father revealed, was the truth that made them free. Conversely, if you recall from earlier in the chapter, Jesus stated, “if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.” The implication is that when they finally did believe this truth, it set them free.

So, the argument continued, as the Pharisees still did not recognize Jesus’ claim to be the “I am” of the Old Testament. However, the discussion finally climaxed when Jesus made the following statement...

“Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.

Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.” –John 8:58-59

Finally, they understood that Jesus was telling them that He was the revelation of the Father, the “I am,” and that if they refused to believe that He was God in flesh, they would die in their sins. However, instead of believing, they picked up stones to attempt to kill Him. This very clearly indicates that they truly understood His claim, but yet considered it blasphemy due to their unbelief.

It is important to note one point regarding the previous passage, John 8. Some critics may try to look at the following verses which we discussed in some detail and state that the identification of the Father in Verse 27 specifically refers only to the phrase “but he that sent me” in Verse 26, rather than Verses 25 and 26 as a whole.

25 “Then said they unto him, Who art thou? And Jesus saith unto them, Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning.

26 I have many things to say and to judge of you: but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him.

27 They understood not that he spake to them of the Father.”

–John 8:26-27

They try to make this assertion in order to avoid admitting the very obvious alternative of having to acknowledge that Jesus was in fact calling Himself the Father revealed. By saying that Verse 27 only referred to the specific phrase “but he that sent me,” they feel they can cling to the “distinct persons” ideology. However, Jesus utterly shatters that idea in John 12:45...

“And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me.” –John 12:45

In other words, if you see Jesus, you are seeing the visible manifestation of the Father in the only three-dimensional form perceptible to human eyes. It simply cannot be any clearer than this.

“But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him.” –John 10:38

In other words, they are the same being, composed of the same essence. Jesus goes to great lengths to convince the masses that He was not a distinct person from God the Father. This is the simple and logical truth clearly stated. This is also demonstrated in John 14...

“I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.” –John 14:18

In this passage, the word “comfortless” in Greek is “orphanos” (Strong’s #G3737), which literally means “parentless, or fatherless” and is the root of our word “orphan.”

-<http://biblehub.com/greek/3737.htm> (Retrieved 2/18/18)

Jesus here identifies Himself as the Father, as He was essentially saying, “I will not leave you as orphans,” or in other words, “I will not leave you fatherless.”

We will now examine several other verses that clearly require Jesus and the Father to be the same, excluding any possibility that they are distinct co-equal and co-eternal beings...

- Jesus Christ and God (the Father) both raised Jesus from the dead:

“Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.

Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?

But he spake of the temple of his body.” –John 2:19-21

Here, we see that Jesus raised Himself from the dead. But in the following passage, we're told that God (the Father) raised Him from the dead...

“Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.”

–Acts 2:24

- Jesus and the Father both sent the Comforter to us:

“Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I (Jesus speaking) will send him unto you.”

–John 16:7

Here, we see that Jesus sent the Comforter to us. But in the following verse, we're told that the Father sent the Comforter...

“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”

–John 14:26

- Jesus and God (the Father) both will raise up the believers at the last day:

“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: and I (Jesus) will raise him up at the last day.”

-John 6:40

Here, we see that Jesus will resurrect the believers. But in the following passages, we're told that God (the Father) will...

“(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth (meaning to resurrect) the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.” -Romans 4:17

“And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power.” -1 Corinthians 6:14

- No man can be drawn to Jesus except by the Father, yet Jesus claimed to draw all men unto Himself:

“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.” -John 6:44

Here, we see that the Father must draw men to Christ. But in the following passage, we're told that Jesus would draw all men unto Himself...

“And I (Jesus), if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” -John 12:32

- Jesus and the Father both sanctify us:

“That he (previous verse identifies “he” as referring to Christ) might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,” –Ephesians 5:26

Here, we see that Jesus sanctifies us. But in the following passage, we’re told that our sanctification comes from God the Father...

“Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called:” –Jude 1:1

- Scripture states that the Father was manifested to take away our sins, and yet we call that manifestation Jesus:

“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.

And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.” –1 John 3:1-5

Here, we see that the Father (Verse 1) was manifested to take away our sins (Verse 5). We can easily trace the Father as being the subject of Verse 5 through the continual usage of the pronoun “he” throughout this excerpt. The next passage also states that God was manifested in the flesh, clearly speaking of the Jesus Christ...

“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.” -1 Timothy 3:16

Trinitarians believe the distinct “god-person” called “The Son,” the “second person in the Trinity” was manifested in the flesh. Yet, in these passages, we see that God the Father was manifested in the flesh, in the man Christ. Were the Father and the Son, if distinct, both manifested for our sins? How many sacrifices did we need? Only one was manifested! This only makes sense if you understand they were not distinct, but one!

It is easy to understand these seemingly contradictory passages if you come from the foundational understanding that Jesus is the Father manifested in the flesh. If you take the position of distinct persons, then there is an obvious redundancy – or even contradiction – in all of these passages, as both the Son and Father are shown performing the same tasks.

Jesus Is The Yahweh Of The Old Testament Revealed

Continuing with our subject of Jesus being the Father revealed, we will investigate the Scriptural proof that Jesus is the God of the Old Testament manifested in flesh.

The Hebrew God of the Old Testament is presented as Yahweh, revealed as the “I AM,” or the eternal self-existing one. This comes from the burning bush encounter in Exodus 3. When Moses asked who to say has sent him, God told him to tell Israel that “I AM that I AM” has sent him. However, in the verse that follows, God changes it to the third person “He is,” as it would have been rather awkward for Moses to tell Pharaoh and the Israelites that “I AM” has sent him.

The word “He is” comes from the Hebrew root word “hayah” (Strong’s #H1961), which means, “to be.” It is the third person form of this word, “He is,” that becomes the name Yahweh. This was the name by which God revealed Himself to Israel at this point in time. In the New Testament, this same Yahweh took on a body of flesh and revealed Himself to mankind as Jesus (Hebrew – Yeshua (Strong’s #H3442), the contraction of Yehoshua), which literally means “he will save,” or “Yahweh saves.”

-James Strong, “Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible,” Updated and Expanded Ed., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007, p. 1467.

This progressive New Testament revelation of the personal name of God in no way changed thousands of years of clear understanding of the nature of God. The Old Testament established the foundational knowledge of God’s nature as being one. The New Testament picks

right up with that in revealing Jesus Christ as that one Yahweh spoken of throughout the Old Testament, but in bodily form!

One excellent example is Paul's encounter on the road to Damascus. When Paul, a highly educated Jewish Pharisee, encountered the blinding light on his way to Damascus, he asked "Who art thou, Lord?" Being a strict monotheistic Jew, he was actually asking "Who art thou, Yahweh?" The Lord answered in Acts 9:5: "I am Jesus."

The next several examples originate in the Old Testament and are concluded in the New Testament with Jesus Christ. The understanding is that in the Old Testament, the Hebrew people only knew of one God - Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel. Whenever you see the term "LORD" used in relation to God in the Old Testament, normally in capital letters, that term "LORD" is actually a replacement term for the actual word "Yahweh."

In the understanding of the ancient Jews, Yahweh was at that time the revealed name of God. It was considered so sacred to them, that they would not even speak it nor would they write it in full. They left out the vowels, yielding the tetragrammaton, YHWH, eventually replacing it with "Adonai," the Hebrew word for Lord. In other words, they revered the name Yahweh so greatly, that they wouldn't even write the abbreviation of Yahweh, and it became substituted with "Adonai," or Lord. There should be no confusion as to the identification of the term "LORD" in the Old Testament - it is Yahweh.

-*"Expository Dictionary of Bible Words,"* pp. 439-440.

As we look at these examples that are fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the understanding to be gained is the progressive revelation of who Yahweh is! Unfortunately, Israel as a nation has rejected this revelation, and most of mainstream Christianity has essentially rejected it as well, as they substitute it with the triune distinct persons misconception. Rather than understanding the clear revelation of Scripture, they instead misinterpret Jesus to be a distinct person from the Father, rather than the Father Yahweh manifested in flesh coming to save mankind by taking on the body of a man!

Essentially, because He took on a body, the Trinitarians, just like the Jews, misidentify Him as being someone other than God the Father, the Yahweh of the Old Testament! In other words, they to this day have not comprehended the “mystery of godliness” explained by Paul in 1 Timothy 3:16...

“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.”
-1 Timothy 3:16

Building upon this idea of the fully-capitalized Old Testament word “LORD” as meaning Yahweh, we will now examine a number of examples where Old Testament passages or prophecies are given using LORD, but are then readdressed or fulfilled in the New Testament, giving us the understanding that it was speaking of Christ. In other words, it proves that Jesus Christ is the LORD, or Yahweh of the Old Testament, only manifested in flesh as a man. We have

purposely left the term “LORD” capitalized in these passages, as it is found in the KJV...

- Isaiah 40:3 vs. Matthew 3:3...

“The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD (Yahweh), make straight in the desert a highway for our God.” –Isaiah 40:3

“For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make his paths straight.”
–Matthew 3:3

It is understood that Matthew 3:3 speaks of John the Baptist fulfilling the Isaiah prophecy as he prepared the way for the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ. So then we must understand the usage of the term “LORD” in Isaiah, referring to Yahweh, as being fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

- Jeremiah 23:5-6...

“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD (Yahweh), that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, The LORD (Yahweh) Our Righteousness.” –Jeremiah 23:5-6

Depicted here is an obvious Messianic prophecy referring to Jesus Christ. Jeremiah names Him “The LORD Our Righteousness,” which makes it appropriate for Jesus Christ to be called “Yahweh Our Righteousness.”

- Isaiah 59:16 and 40:10, Isaiah 53:1-2...

“And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him.”

–Isaiah 59:16

“Behold, the LORD God (Yahweh) will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him.” – Isaiah 40:10

In these first two passages, Isaiah speaks of the arm of Yahweh bringing salvation and ruling. The following verses describe the Messiah as the identification of the arm of the LORD (Yahweh).

“Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?”

For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.”

–Isaiah 53:1-2

These two verses are part of what is probably the most well-known Old Testament Messianic prophecy – Isaiah 53, speaking of the future Messiah, Christ. We can then understand that the Messiah, who we know as Jesus Christ, was not described as a different person, but rather the same God – this “arm of Yahweh” – coming in flesh in order to introduce salvation to mankind.

Notice especially, how Isaiah 40:10 had said “the LORD God (Yahweh) will come...” We then see that it was Jesus who came, making it even clearer to us that Jesus is Yahweh in flesh. The “arm” imagery represented the humanity of Christ as the Messiah.

- Isaiah 40:5, 42:8, 48:11; John 1:14, 17:5; 1 Corinthians 2:8...

All of these passages refer to glory – the glory of the LORD (Yahweh)...

“And the glory of the LORD (Yahweh) shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.” –Isaiah 40:5

Isaiah 40:5 tells us that the glory of Yahweh will be revealed, which we recognize as a clear prophetic reference to Jesus Christ the Messiah.

“I am the LORD (Yahweh): that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.”

–Isaiah 42:8

“For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it: for how should my name be polluted? and I (Yahweh speaking...) will not give my glory unto another.”

–Isaiah 48:11

So, Isaiah 42:8 and 48:11 tell us that Yahweh will not give His glory to another.

After reading that the Messiah is the glory of Yahweh, and then reading that Yahweh will not share His glory with another, the clear conclusion is that He could fulfill this only by revealing Himself as the Messiah. There cannot be multiple persons sharing glory. So, we must understand Jesus Christ as the revelation of Yahweh in flesh. This indeed is confirmed in John 1:14 and 17:5 which speak of the glory Jesus had with the Father.

“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”

–John 1:14

John 1:14 claims that the glory belongs to Jesus Christ, although we understand from Isaiah 40:5 that the glory belongs to Yahweh. This makes complete sense when you understand that Jesus Christ is Yahweh revealed in the form of a man, rather than another person (whom Yahweh will not give His glory to).

Furthermore, 1 Corinthians 2:8 declares that Jesus is the Lord of glory!

“Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”

-1 Corinthians 2:8

The following verse describes Jesus coming in the Father’s glory...

“For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.” –Matthew 16:27

And John 17:5 reads...

“And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.”

–John 17:5

The conclusion is simple: If Jesus Christ has Yahweh’s glory, He must be Yahweh. Conversely, if Jesus Christ was a second co-equal person “in God,” He would have His own glory that was equal to Yahweh’s, and would not need to return in the Father’s glory, nor would he need the glory of a different “god-person.”

(For a deeper look into John 17:5, see the section entitled [The Son’s Predestined Glory](#), found on page 151.)

- Jesus is the name of Yahweh revealed...

“Therefore my people shall know my name: therefore they shall know in that day that I am he that doth speak: behold, it is I.”
–Isaiah 52:6

Yahweh tells Israel that one day His name would be revealed to them, and He would speak to them. He also admonished them to understand it is He (Yahweh) who is identified as the speaker. We know however, that it was Jesus Christ who revealed the Father (John 1:18), and manifested His name (John 17:6), thus He must be Yahweh.

“No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared (revealed) him.” –John 1:18

“I (Jesus speaking) have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.”
–John 17:6

John 17:6 actually says that Jesus manifested the name of the Father. That is clear to us, as the name Jesus means, “Yahweh saves.” So, the name Jesus is the revelation of Yahweh’s salvation. But it is also the progressive revelation of the identification of Yahweh Himself, as we can see in all of these examples.

- Isaiah 45:23 revealed in Philippians 2:10...

“I (Yahweh speaking...) have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.”

–Isaiah 45:23

“That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;
And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

–Philippians 2:10-11

To truly understand the weight and importance of this passage in Philippians, we must understand what Paul has in mind here. He’s quoting Yahweh speaking through the Prophet Isaiah. To better understand the true meaning, let’s go back and read Verses 21-25 of Isaiah’s prophecy...

“Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the LORD (Yahweh)? and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me.

Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.

I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.

Surely, shall one say, in the LORD (Yahweh) have I righteousness and strength: even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed.
In the LORD (Yahweh) shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.” –Isaiah 45:21-25

Being a Pharisee, Paul was intimately familiar with this text from Isaiah. Just to reiterate what was already stated earlier, any time you see the word LORD in capital letters in the Old Testament, it always means “Yahweh.” Paul knew exactly what he was saying: Jesus Christ is Yahweh! At one time, Paul was in charge of putting to death those who believed Jesus was Yahweh. It is extremely powerful to realize that he would one day die for his wholehearted belief in this very notion.

- Isaiah 43:10-11 and John 8:24...

“Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.

I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour.”
–Isaiah 43:10-11

In this passage, we see Yahweh speaking about His chosen Messianic “servant”, whom the New Testament of course reveals as Jesus Christ. But notice that Yahweh then says “that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he.” What else needs to be said? This is one of the most powerful proof texts

that demonstrates that Jesus is the Yahweh of the Old Testament manifest in flesh as the Messianic Savior.

It then continues on to give one of the most explicit statements of oneness in the entire Bible: “before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the Lord; and beside me there is no savior.” It seems almost as if this passage was pre-engineered to refute Trinitarianism. The Yahweh of the Old Testament is the future Messianic servant, and besides Him there is no Savior. Yet, the New Testament tells us that Jesus is the Savior. For a Trinitarian, this entire verse is unexplainable. But for a Oneness believer, it is an overwhelming proof confirming the reality of the mighty God in Jesus.

This Messianic passage is then confirmed in the New Testament in John 8:24. During Jesus’ discourse with the Pharisees, He repeatedly identified Himself as the Father revealed in the Son, or Yahweh revealed as a man...

“I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.”

-John 8:24

Although the pronoun “he” was not in the original Greek, Jesus’ statement seems to refer back to the words of God the Father in Isaiah 43:10 to prove that He was Yahweh – God Himself – revealed. He was that “only savior” spoken of. If you don’t believe this simple truth, Jesus said you will “die in your sins.”

The previous were just several of many passages that identify Jesus Christ as being the revelation of Yahweh. In the following table, there are two lists of descriptive titles along with their respective Scripture references. The list to the left includes Old Testament passages speaking of Yahweh. The list to the right includes New Testament passages using the same descriptive title, now revealing Jesus in the same way. Thus, the verses all prove that Jesus Christ is Yahweh.

<u>Yahweh:</u>		<u>Jesus:</u>	
<u>Title</u>	<u>Scripture</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Scripture</u>
Almighty	Genesis 17:1	Almighty	Revelation 1:8
I Am	Exodus 3:14-16	I Am	John 8:58
Rock	Psalms 18:2; 28:1	Rock	1 Corinthians 10:4
Horn of Salvation	Psalms 18:2	Horn of Salvation	Luke 1:69
Shepherd	Psalms 23:1 Isaiah 40:10-11	Good Shepherd Great Shepherd Chief Shepherd	John 10:11 Hebrews 13:20 1 Peter 5:4
King of Glory	Psalms 24:7-10	Lord of Glory	1 Corinthians 2:8
Light	Psalms 27:1 Isaiah 60:19	Light	John 1:4-9; 8:12 Revelation 21:23
Salvation	Psalms 27:1 Isaiah 12:2	Only Salvation	Acts 4:10-12
Lord of Lords	Psalms 136:3	Lord of Lords	Revelation 19:16
Holy One	Isaiah 12:6	Holy One	Acts 2:27
Lawgiver	Isaiah 33:22	Testator of the First Testament (Law)	Hebrews 9:14-17
Judge	Isaiah 33:22	Judge	Acts 10:42
First and Last	Micah 5:1 Isaiah 41:4 Isaiah 44:6; 48:12	Alpha and Omega, Beginning and Ending, First / Last	Revelation 1:8 Revelation 22:13
Only Savior	Isaiah 43:11 Isaiah 45:21 Isaiah 60:16	Savior	Titus 2:13; 3:6
Giver of Spiritual Water	Isaiah 44:3; 55:1	Giver of Living Water	John 4:10-14 John 7:38-39
King of Israel	Isaiah 44:6	King of Israel and King of Kings	John 1:49 Revelation 19:16
Only Creator	Isaiah 44:24 Isaiah 45:8 Isaiah 48:13	Creator of Everything	John 1:3 Colossians 1:16 Hebrews 1:10
Only Just God	Isaiah 45:21	Just One	Acts 7:52
Redeemer	Isaiah 54:5 Isaiah 60:16	Redeemer	Galatians 3:13 Revelation 5:9

The following table reveals the partially descriptive titles of Yahweh used in the Old Testament. Each of the titles revealed a part of the identity and characteristics of Yahweh to Israel. In the New Testament, these same characteristics are revealed in the identity of Jesus Christ, identifying Him as the same Yahweh of the Old Testament.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Jesus Is Our...</u>	<u>Scripture</u>
Yahweh-Jireh (Provider)	Provider (of the Sacrifice)	Hebrews 10:10-12
Yahweh-Rapha (Healer)	Healer	James 5:14-15
Yahweh-Nissi (Banner, Victory)	Victory	1 Corinthians 15:57
Yahweh-M'kaddesh (Sanctifier)	Sanctifier	Ephesians 5:26
Yahweh-Shalom (Peace)	Peace	John 14:27
Yahweh-Sabaoth (Lord of Hosts)	Lord of Hosts	James 5:4-7
Yahweh-Elyon (Most High)	Most High	Luke 1:32, 76, 78
Yahweh-Raah (Shepherd)	Shepherd	John 10:11
Yahweh-Hoseenu (Maker)	Maker	John 1:3
Yahweh-Tsidkenu (Righteousness)	Righteousness	1 Corinthians 1:30
Yahweh-Shammah (Present)	Ever-Present One	Matthew 28:20

Why Is Jesus Christ Called The “Son Of God?”

Jesus Christ is called the Son of God primarily because the Holy Ghost caused His conception, rather than it being caused by a human man. Additionally, a son is by definition, one born to a mother and father. Jesus, as a true human, can accurately be called a “son.” However, a son in the Biblical sense doesn’t always simply refer to an offspring of two parents. It is often used to denote a person who displays a mental or moral resemblance to something or someone else. For example, Jesus called two of His disciples “sons of thunder.” Obviously, they weren’t the literal offspring of thunder, but yet for some reason Jesus used this term to describe them.

“And James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and he surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder:”
–Mark 3:17

Two other good examples of this are as follows...

“And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?” –Acts 13:10

The person to whom the above passage was spoken at was not in fact an actual offspring of Satan, but rather one who embodied the deeds and mentality of Satan.

“They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham’s children, ye would do the works

of Abraham.

But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham.

Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God.

Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.

Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word.

Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.

He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.”

–John 8:39-44

In this passage, Jesus, in His discourse with the Pharisees, connects the dots even further for us. According to His statements, whoever's works you perform defines who your “father” is. If you do the works of the devil, you are a son of the devil. If you do the works of God, you are a son of God. How accurate it then is to call Jesus the Son of God!

Interestingly, the New Testament repeatedly calls true believers “sons of God.” We, as believers who have undergone the gospel plan of salvation (discussed later in the study), are to resemble God in every aspect of our lives. Our actions, mentality, speech, interests, families, values, dress code, etc. should all display the holiness of God. If we embody God in our lives, it is Biblically accurate to call ourselves

“sons of God.” Jesus as a man embodied the principles, mentality and truth of God since He in fact, was God. Rather than being a descendant of God in the classical sense (which would make Him other than God), He is God simply in human form acting as the physical, tangible representation of God on earth.

Jesus was called the Son of God because He embodied the mentality and deeds of God, but also by virtue of the fact that He was a literal son born of a woman named Mary. God the Father was the “Father” of Jesus in a unique way, in that the Holy Ghost (God in action) caused His conception. Jesus’ earthly human father did not cause His conception, but rather, the Heavenly Father caused His conception (which is one factor that made the Father, the Father!).

The definition of a father can be said to be one who causes conception. Though the mechanism and materials used were different from the normal human reproductive experience, the terms “Father” and “Son” are used to simplify matters and help us as humans understand God in His different roles of action and relationship towards us. As we will see throughout this study, the terms, “Father,” “Son,” and “Holy Ghost/Spirit” are descriptive titles, not names, that rationally and functionally describe God’s various manifestations towards us. God simply utilized human titles in order to interact in an understandable way with humanity.

The Purposes For The Son

Since the Biblical teaching is that the role of the Son is temporary rather than eternal (as we saw in our previous section), why did God choose to reveal Himself through the manifestation of the Son? Why did He beget the Son? Let's examine several of the primary reasons for this.

- Our Savior: The primary purpose of the Son is to be our Savior. The work of salvation required many roles that only a human being could fulfill, including the roles of Sacrifice, Propitiation, Substitute, Kinsman-Redeemer, Reconciler, Mediator, Advocate, High Priest, Last Adam, and Example. These terms overlap in many ways, but each represents an important aspect of the work of salvation that, according to the plan of God, could only be done by a human being.
- Our Propitiation: According to God's plan, the shedding of blood was necessary for the remission of human sins (Hebrews 9:22). The blood of animals could not permanently take away human sin because animals are inferior to humans (Hebrews 10:4). No other human could purchase redemption for someone else, because all had sinned and so deserved the penalty of death for themselves (Romans 3:24, 6:23). Only God was sinless, but He did not have flesh and blood. Therefore, God prepared a human body for Himself (Hebrews 10:5), that He might live a sinless life in flesh and shed innocent blood to save humanity. He became flesh and blood so that He could through death defeat the devil and deliver humanity (Hebrews 2:14-15).

In this way, Christ is our Propitiation – the means by which we obtain forgiveness, the satisfaction of God’s justice, and the appeasement of God’s holy wrath (Romans 3:25). The sacrifice of Christ is the means by which God pardons our sin without compromising His righteousness and justice. We are saved today through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ – through the offering of the Son of God (Hebrews 10:10-20, John 3:16). Thus, the Son is the sacrifice and propitiation for our sins.

When the Son of God became a sacrifice, He also became a substitute for us. He died in our place, bore our sins, and paid the penalty of death for our sins (Isaiah 53:5-6, 1 Peter 2:24). He was more than a martyr; He actually took our place. He tasted death for every person (Hebrews 2:9). Of course, the only way Jesus could be our substitute and die in our place was by coming in flesh as a descendant of Adam.

- Our Kinsman-Redeemer: Christ’s role as our Kinsman-Redeemer is also made possible by the Sonship. In the Old Testament, if a man sold his property or sold himself into servitude, a close relative had the right to buy back the man’s property or freedom for him (Leviticus 25:25, 47-49). By coming in flesh, Jesus became our Brother (Hebrews 2:11-12). Thus, He qualified Himself to be our Kinsman-Redeemer. The Bible describes Him as our Redeemer (Romans 3:24, Revelation 5:9, et al.). The Book of Ruth is emblematic of this concept, and profiles in advance Jesus Christ’s role of the “goel” (Strong’s #H1352), or Kinsman-Redeemer.

- Our Mediator: Through His humanity, Jesus Christ is able to mediate, that is, to go between humanity and God and represent humanity to God. As a Mediator, Jesus reconciles us to God; He brings us back into fellowship with God (2 Corinthians 5:18-19). The gap between the holy God and sinful humans was bridged by the sinless man, Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5).

“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;” -1 Timothy 2:5

We should notice how carefully Paul maintained the oneness of God in this verse. There is no distinction in God, but rather a distinction between God and the man Christ Jesus. It is not God who mediates between God and humans, nor is it “God the Son” who does so. Rather, it is the man Christ who mediates. Only a sinless man could approach a holy God on behalf of humanity.

- Our High Priest: Closely associated with Christ’s role as Mediator, is His role as our High Priest (Hebrews 2:16-18, 4:14-16). In His humanity, Jesus was tempted just as we are; it is because of His human experience that He can help us as a compassionate High Priest. Hebrews tells us He entered the Temple, went behind the veil into the Most Holy Place, and there offered His own blood (Hebrews 6:19, 9:11-12) – this speaking either typologically, or of the real Temple in heaven. Through His sacrifice and atonement, we have direct access to

the throne of God (Hebrews 4:16, 6:20). The Son is our High Priest through whom we can boldly approach God.

- Our Advocate: Similarly, the Sonship allows Christ to be our Advocate, or one called alongside to help (1 John 2:1). If we sin even after conversion, we have someone who pleads our case for mercy before God. Again, it is the role of the Son that accomplishes this, for when we confess our sins the blood of Christ is applied to those sins, making His advocacy for us successful.
- The Last Adam: Through His humanity, Jesus is the Last Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45-47). He came to conquer and condemn sin in the flesh and to defeat death itself (Romans 8:3, 1 Corinthians 15:55-57). He came as a man so that He could replace Adam as the representative of the human race. By doing so, He reversed all the consequences of Adam's fall for those who believe on Him (Romans 5:12-21). Everything that humanity lost because of Adam's sin, Jesus won back as the Last Adam, the new representative of the human race.
- Our Example: Not only did Jesus come in the flesh to die, but He also came to give us an example of an overcoming life so that we could follow in His footsteps (1 Peter 2:21). He showed us how to live victoriously over sin in the flesh. He became the Word of God revealed in flesh (John 1:1). He became the Living Word so that we could understand clearly what God wanted us to be like. Of course, He gives us power to follow His example. Just as we are reconciled by His death, we are saved by His life

(Romans 5:10). His Spirit gives us the power to live the righteous life that He wants us to live (Acts 1:8, Romans 8:4). The Son not only represents humans to God, but also represents God to humanity. He is an Apostle, or one chosen and sent by God for a specific purpose (Hebrews 3:1). He is a Prophet, representing God and revealing His Word to humanity (Acts 3:20-23, Hebrews 1:1-2). His humanity is crucial in this regard, because God used the humanity of the Son to reach us on our level.

- The Son: The Sonship also revealed God's nature to humans. Through the Son, God communicated His great love for us and displayed His great power in a way that we could understand. God used the name of Jesus as the culminated revelation of His nature and the prophetic culmination of the Old Testament theophanies.

“No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.”

–John 1:18

“And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.”

–Isaiah 40:5

“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

–2 Corinthians 4:6

In other words, the Son of God became the means by which the invisible, incomprehensible God revealed Himself to us.

- The Son of David: Another purpose of the Son is to provide a fulfillment of many promises in the Old Testament to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the nation of Israel, and David. Jesus Christ will completely fulfill the promises relating to the descendants of these men, and He will do it in the Millennial Kingdom on earth (Revelation 20:4). He will be literally the King of Israel and of all the earth (Zechariah 14:16-17, John 1:49). God promised David that his house and throne would be established forever (2 Samuel 7:16). Jesus will fulfill this literally in Himself, being an actual descendant of David (Luke 3) and being a legal heir to the throne of David (Matthew 1).
- Our Righteous Judge: The Sonship allows God to judge humanity. God is righteous, just, and fair. He is also merciful. In His justice and mercy, He decided not to judge humans until He actually had experienced all the temptations and problems of humanity and until He had demonstrated that it's possible to live righteously in the flesh (with divine power, of course, but with the same power He made available to us through the Spirit).

The Bible specifically states that the Father will judge no one; only the Son will judge (John 5:22, 27). God will judge humanity through Jesus Christ (Romans 2:16). In other words, God (Jesus) will judge the world in the role of One who lived in the

flesh, who overcame sin in the flesh, and who made the same overcoming power available to all humanity.

So, after studying just some of the many purposes of the Sonship, it is easy to see why the Son came into existence at a point in time instead of being in existence from all eternity. His manifestation as the Son was necessary and functional on many levels, as we've demonstrated here. God simply awaited the fullness of time when all these purposes could be put into action best (Galatians 4:4). Thus, there was no reason for the Son to have substantial existence until the conception of Christ in Mary's womb. Everything about the Son was related to His work with humanity.

After the millennial reign and the last judgment, the purposes for the Sonship will be fulfilled and the role of the Son will end. When we view the purposes for the Son, we can understand that the Sonship is temporary and not eternal. We have shown that Scripture clearly details for us exactly when the Sonship began and exactly when the Sonship will end.

The Sonship Will Have An End

Let's continue to explore the reasons why the concept of an "eternal Son" is contrary to Biblical teaching. Not only did the Sonship have a beginning, but it will, in at least one sense, have an ending. This is evident from 1 Corinthians 15:23-28. In particular, Verses 24-25 say...

"Then cometh the end, when he (Christ) shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father..."

For he (Christ) must reign, till (until) he hath put all enemies under his feet." -1 Corinthians 15:24a, 25

So, we see that the reign of the Son will have an end (the key word in Verse 25 is "till," or "until.") Verse 28 then says...

"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

This passage of Scripture is impossible to explain if one thinks of a "God the Son" who is co-equal and co-eternal with God the Father. But it's easily explained if we realize that "Son of God" refers to a specific role that God temporarily assumed for the purpose of redemption. When the reasons for the Sonship cease to exist, God will cease acting in His role as Son, and the Sonship will be submerged back into the greatness of God, who will return to His role as Father, Creator, Bridegroom, and Ruler of all.

Ephesians 5:27 describes a similar scene...

“That he (Jesus) might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” –Ephesians 5:27

Jesus in His role as Son, will present the Church to Himself as His beloved bride – one of His final acts in the role of the Son (cf. Rev. 21:9-11).

We find another indication that the Sonship has an ending in Acts 2:34-35, where Peter quoted David in Psalm 110:1...

“For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Until I make thy foes thy footstool.” –Acts 2:34-35

We should again note the word “until.” This passage describes the Spirit of God (“the Lord”) speaking prophetically to the human manifestation of Christ (“my Lord”). The right hand of God is an anthropomorphism, speaking metaphorically of God’s authority and power (remember, God is a Spirit and doesn’t have body parts). Making foes a footstool means utterly defeating the enemy and making an open show of their defeat. In ancient times, the victor sometimes did this literally, placing his foot on his enemies’ heads or necks (Joshua 10:24).

So, the prophecy in Psalm 110 is this: The Spirit of God will give all power and authority to the man Christ Jesus, the Son of God, until the Son has completely vanquished the enemies (Satan, the fallen

angels and demons, and sin and its effects). The Son will have all power until He does this.

What happens to the Son after this? Does this mean an eternal person of a Trinity will stop sitting on the right hand of God or lose all power? No. It simply means that the role of the Son will cease. God will use His role as Son – God manifest in flesh – to conquer Satan, thereby fulfilling Genesis 3:15, the first Messianic prophecy, in which God said the seed of the woman would bruise the head of the devil. After that, God will no longer need the human role to rule.

Does this mean that God will cease using the resurrected and glorified body of Christ? We believe that Jesus will continue to use His glorified body throughout eternity. This is indicated by Revelation 22:3-4, which describes a visible God even after the last judgment and after the creation of the new heaven and earth...

“And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:
And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.”
–Revelation 22:3-4

Although the glorified body of Christ will continue to exist, all the reasons for the reign of the Son will be gone and all the roles played by the Son will be over. So, it is in this sense that the Sonship will end.

Did Jesus Have Mary's DNA?

DNA, or deoxyribonucleic acid, is the hereditary material in humans and other organisms. It is a molecule that carries most of the genetic instructions used in the development, functioning and reproduction of all known living organisms.

-<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/DNA> (Retrieved 11/17/17)

Often, people wonder if Jesus was simply a 50/50 mixture of human and God DNA. In other words, if Jesus had Mary's DNA, how was He 100% God and 100% man simultaneously? The answer is actually quite simple. The physical DNA that caused His conception wasn't what made Him God; otherwise He would have been a demigod. DNA does not determine the essence of God. DNA is human and physical. God, as we established earlier, is a spirit being in nature. Jesus' physical body, made from DNA, was simply a necessary part of the human experience in which He, as a spirit being, entered and animated.

According to the Bible, spiritual beings have the ability to take different bodily forms. This is displayed over and over in the Biblical record, but especially in the Old Testament. A theophany is a visible manifestation of God to mankind. Many theophanies of God are demonstrated in the Old Testament. In many of these instances, God took on the body of a human and performed human functions such as touching and eating. However, it was not an actual human body. It was apparently a type of spiritual simulation of a physical body. To be a true human however, Jesus had to be made with human DNA and be born of a woman. Jesus presumably inherited mitochondrial DNA and genes from His mother Mary combined with whatever DNA the

Holy Ghost prepared and impregnated her with. It has been suggested that whatever DNA was used by the Holy Ghost was uncorrupted by the fall of Adam and the subsequent curse. God evidently created a sperm cell with a Y chromosome and alleles untainted by Adamic behavioral traits and fallen nature. The Bible presents Adam as the first man, and gives Jesus Christ the title of “the last Adam.”

“And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.” -1 Corinthians 15:45

In other words, what the First Adam failed to accomplish, the Last Adam accomplished! However, what made Jesus God was the fact that the very Spirit being essence of God filled and animated His physical body. The Spirit of God was revealed in flesh in the Incarnation as the man Christ – all God, all man.

Note: Genetics Definitions...

- Mitochondrial DNA: maternally inherited DNA
- Genes: unit of heredity that is transferred from a parent to offspring and determines some characteristics of the offspring
- Sperm cell: the male reproductive cell
- Y-Chromosome: a sex chromosome that is normally present only in male cells
- Allele: an alternative form of a gene that also determines traits in an offspring

-<https://www.thoughtco.com/genetics-4133577> (Retrieved 11/20/17)

Understanding Man In The Image Of God – Body, Soul And Spirit

One of the most important concepts to understand is the nature of God in relation to humanity. To understand this, we will briefly examine an easy analogy. A man is only one person. He may have many attributes or components, but is only one person. You may refer to his mind, body, spirit, will, or emotions, but he is only one person. The same is true of God. Bear in mind also, that this is a relevant analogy, as the Bible states that we are made in the image of God.

“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness... So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.”

–Genesis 1:26a, 27

We will also discuss some of the layers of meaning inherent in this passage in later sections entitled [Is “Elohim” in Genesis 1:26 Plural? Does That Prove A Trinity?](#) (page 132) and [Man – Made in God’s Image](#) (page 494).

We will now seek to gain insight regarding tripartite man and the nature of God. Tripartite is a term used to describe the three Biblical components intrinsic to man’s construct (body, soul, and spirit).

In order to gain full understanding to the text of Genesis 1:26-27, we must look at God’s image creature, which is humanity. Regardless of how we identify the various components that make up a person, he

definitely has only one personality and will. He is one person in every way. This indicates that the Creator, in whose image humans were made, is also one being with one personality and will. One cannot look at the Creator who is the image (God) and come up with a different basic understanding than the one created in His image (man).

We cannot then look at man, being obviously one person, and use the text to come to the conclusion that God is three persons. That would constitute a logical inconsistency and fail to maintain meaning in the original comparison. Either both man and God are one person or they are both three persons. They cannot be different, or man is not actually an image of God, and the comparison falls apart, rendering the text meaningless. Since we understand that we as humans individually are singular in person, made up of body, soul, and spirit, the text requires the same understanding to be had regarding the nature of God. His being is composed of one “person” with components that are mirrored by man’s nature.

The following passage makes it clear that man is composed of a spirit, a soul, and a body...

“And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” -1 Thessalonians 5:23

So, we see that according to Scripture, man is composed of three parts: spirit, soul and body. The Bible describes mankind as being eternal, but currently entrapped within a physical body. The eternal components of man are his spirit and soul. The body is the temporary

dwelling place of the spirit and soul that will one day die and decompose. However, it is your eternal man that is the “real you,” comprising your life force, mind and personality. The soul is the part of you that includes the mind, will, and emotions, which help define your personality; it is who we are as individuals. The spirit is the aspect of humanity that connects with God. It can accurately be stated that nobody is really visible. One cannot see you; one can only see the visible, physical body you are living in.

You will find that this is patterned after God and is one layer of meaning inherent in the Genesis 1:26 phrase regarding man being made in God’s image and likeness. Just as is the case with humanity, the Scriptures describe components of God that correlate with the spirit and soul components of man. The Bible describes God’s spirit and mind continuously. We will examine this in more detail later on. Just as with man, the eternal components of God are invisible. Scripture has no record of God having a physical body until Christ. Following His death, burial and resurrection, He then appeared in an eternal, glorified, resurrection body not bound to physical constraints. Similarly, the human body will one day die, but the believer is promised a body similar to the resurrection body of Jesus Christ, which evidently will be eternal. So, we can understand very clearly, much of what the Bible means in Genesis 1:26. God right in the first chapter of the Bible was explaining the basis for understanding His own nature by giving us the understanding that we were made after the same pattern.

There is some ambiguity between spirit and soul. They are both invisible and seem to connect in some interesting ways. However, Paul

in the above passage from Thessalonians acknowledged that they are in fact separate. Additionally, the book of Hebrews mentions soul and spirit also in an interesting way.

“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” –Hebrews 4:12

This passage seems to imply that the two are quite connected, but yet the word of God is able to separate even them! In other words, they are similar in some ways, but yet distinct.

Here is a simplified way of understanding spirit, body, and soul, as they may in some capacities relate to the principal manifestations of God:

- Father (Spirit): God manifested Himself primarily as a Father in the OT and is described as being an invisible Spirit.
- Son (Body): God manifested Himself as a Son by taking on a physical body in order to endure the cross to redeem physical mankind.
- Holy Ghost (Soul): God manifests as the Holy Ghost to demonstrate His action in the lives of mankind. The Holy Ghost is the mode through which God acts upon the soul (mind, thoughts, will) of mankind in order to bring him to repentance and salvation.

So, we can see three manifestations of the same one “person” of God! Additionally, the Bible seems to describe the components that make up man as “imaging” the components that make up God.

- Spirit: (Hebrew: Ruwach – Strong’s #H7307, Greek: Pneuma – Strong’s #G4151) We have already seen that the Bible describes God’s true essence as being spirit. Man is like God in this way, because though he is currently contained in a physical body, God created him also with a spirit that is eternal. John 3:5 speaks of the supernatural birth in which we become born again of God by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Ghost/Spirit is the spirit of Jesus Christ which fills the believer.
- Soul: (Hebrew: Nephesh – Strong’s #H5315, Greek: Psuche – Strong’s #G5590) The soul constitutes the mind, thinking, will, emotions, volition, etc. The Greek word “psuche” is the root from which we get our English word “psychology,” which involves the study of the human mind, thoughts, and their effects on behavior.

-<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychology> (Retrieved 11/05/2017)

The Bible refers to the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:17, et al.). The Bible also describes Jesus Christ as the “Word” (Greek “Logos” – Strong’s #G3056), meaning the thoughts, plans, and reason of God. The Gospel of John argues that Jesus is the Word or Logos manifested – the physical expression of the thoughts and plans of God, and is God (Jn. 1).

- Body: (Greek: Soma – Strong’s #G4983) The body is the physical vessel that houses our spirit and soul. This is the natural man, and is the part of us that is temporal rather than eternal. The body will one day die and decompose. However, the Bible makes it clear that the believer will one day inherit an incorruptible eternal resurrection body (1 Cor. 15:51-55). In reference to God, the Bible does not record any permanent bodily manifestation of God until Jesus Christ was born. In order to die for physical man, God took on a physical body to endure the cross as the Son. The NT depicts Jesus Christ as now having a glorified body, which is described as being like unto the bodies that we as believers, will also receive in the resurrection.

This is the best and only way we as finite humans can comprehend the components of God. In the very first book of the Bible, God describes man as being created in His “image and likeness.” If we take this seriously, we can understand that man’s spirit, body and soul are an “image and likeness” of the God who created us. The primary takeaway from this is that if you recognize yourself as being one person, able to be comprised of a spirit, a body and a soul, then we should have no difficulty understanding the nature of God as being one “person” comprised of similar components.

Understanding The Roles And Relationships Of God

Although we touched on it in the last section, let's now begin to take a deeper plunge into understanding the roles and relationships of God in relation to mankind. In our last section, we understood that the Bible certainly seems to express to us that God is a Being comprised of multiple "components," as is His image creation, man. In other words, since we are told in Scripture that man is comprised of body, soul, and spirit, and that we are created in God's image, we can recognize that God also has different components or manifestations – in fact, these manifestations God has used, seem to be mirrored by the body, soul, and spirit components of man. We saw that Scripture speaks of God's Spirit, His mind, and in reference to the Incarnation, His body. We then made the connection between these primary manifestations of God and the components of man – with spirit mirroring the Father, soul mirroring the Holy Ghost, and body mirroring the Son. Let's further examine the purpose for why these components or manifestations of God have the titles they do, and how they are descriptive of the ways that God manifested Himself in order to accomplish what needed to be done for mankind.

Let's first acknowledge the difference between a name and a title. Jesus Christ was the proper name of God as He revealed Himself in the flesh. "The Son" is not His proper name, but rather a descriptive title of a particular role or relationship towards humanity. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are titles of role or relationship. They intend to represent the relationship God has used towards man in a way that is easy and natural for us to understand. They are not proper names!

The importance of using His actual name, rather than titles, is emphasized for us in Colossians 3:17...

“And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.”

–Colossians 3:17

You need to understand that the reason you do everything in the name of Jesus rather than in the titles, is because the power to accomplish tasks in the supernatural is linked to His name. A simple analogy is that of a man cashing a check at the bank. If he simply writes one of many titles he may hold instead of his proper name, the bank will not cash the check! He may be a father, a son, a brother, a doctor, or a reverend, but those are simply titles that he, as a single being, holds in relationship to people. The power to cash the check is in the legal name! That is why Jesus told us to invoke His name, rather than the titles, in all of our words and deeds! This is for instance, the rationale for invoking the name of Jesus Christ rather than the titles during baptism. The power to remit sins is in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ alone!

“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”

–Acts 4:12

So, the one God took on several different relationships in order to accomplish what needed to be performed concerning humanity. He used these relationships to relate in different ways to different people at different times, just as we might do as humans (father, son,

brother, etc.). These titles were intended to simplify things for man by applying labels we can relate to. Unfortunately, man has allowed the Enemy of our souls to pervert this simple truth. Just as a man can be both a father and a son simultaneously, God as a singular person was able to perform both functions as well. However, He is and was still the exact same Being throughout all of His relationships, titles and interactions. Let's discuss the roles of Father, Son, and Spirit...

-Father:

God acted as a Father in that He created the universe, and also as a Father to the nation of Israel. In a unique way, God was also the Father to the baby Jesus because the Holy Ghost (rather than Joseph) caused His conception. You will see this in the following verses...

“Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?” –Malachi 2:10

“Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? is not he thy father that hath bought thee? hath he not made thee, and established thee?” –Deuteronomy 32:6

“But now, O Lord, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand.” –Isaiah 64:8

“A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation.” –Psalm 68:5

“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” – John 1:14

“And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.” -1 John 4:14

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.” -2 Corinthians 1:3-4

-Son:

Jesus is accurately described in Scripture as being both Son of Man and Son of God. Son of Man was an Old Testament Messianic title (from Daniel 7:13-14) that Jesus assumed, as well as a title that indicated His true humanity. He acted as a Son of Man in that He took on a body of flesh, being born of a human woman in order to become our redemptive sacrifice. And He is called the Son of God primarily because the Holy Ghost caused His conception. He was also the physical and moral representation of God to man. Let's look at a few passages where we see these things described...

“Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.” –Matthew 1:23

“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.” –John 3:16

“And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.” -1 John 5:20

“But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,)”
–Mark 2:10

“Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.”
–Matthew 26:64

-Holy Ghost/Spirit:

The Holy Ghost speaks of God in action. It is the medium by which God moves and interacts in the lives of humans or in His creation. The Holy Ghost is literally the Spirit of Jesus. By dying, He released His Spirit to become resident inside the believer. This is the Spirit that guides, helps, and directs the life of a Spirit-filled Christian. It also speaks of the general Spirit of God at work in the world. Let's see this in Scripture...

“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.” –John 14:26

“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.”
–John 16:13

“But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.” –Matthew 10:19-20

“And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.” –Galatians 4:6

“For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,” –Philippians 1:19

So, in this section, we were able to take our understanding of the different components or principle manifestations of the one God deeper by exploring each. God, as one singular “Person,” – has used and still uses – each of these manifestations functionally to accomplish different things in the story of the creation and redemption of mankind.

Is God Limited To Three Manifestations?

In the previous section, we discussed three prominent manifestations of God (Father, Son, and Holy Ghost). Does this mean that God is limited to these three roles? Do these three titles of His roles encompass all that God is? Despite the prominence these manifestations have in the New Testament plan of redemption and salvation, God cannot be limited to these three roles, titles or manifestations.

God manifested Himself in many ways in the Old Testament. He revealed Himself in many theophanies, including human and angelic forms. The Bible uses many other names and titles of God. For example, the fully capitalized “LORD (Yahweh/Jehovah)” and the ordinary term “Lord” appear frequently in the Bible. God has revealed Himself to humans in many other relationships too. For example, we can say He is Lord, King, Bridegroom, Husband, Brother, Apostle, High Priest, Lamb, Shepherd, and the Word. While Father, Son and Holy Ghost represent three important roles, titles, or manifestations of God, He is not limited to these three.

So, we can recognize that the three main components of man (body, soul, and spirit) do seem to mirror the three principle manifestations of God in Scripture, and yet also understand that God is much more than just that. We must be careful not assign the concept of “three” as having a special significance with God’s being and identity. The recognition of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost manifestations does not imply that God is limited to three manifestations or that an “eternal threeness” exists in the nature of God. Moreover, even within

those three, there is not a total distinction of one manifestation from another. For example, God, while being the Father of Creation, used the role of the Holy Ghost back at the creation (Genesis 1:2), while also using His role of the Son – that is, He depended upon His plan for the future Sonship – back at the creation (Hebrews 1:2). We cannot confine God to three or any other number of specific roles and titles. Neither can we sharply divide Him, because He is one. Even His roles and titles overlap. He may manifest Himself in many ways, but He is one being. And these are simply roles or manifestations – they are not part of His actual being or nature.

How then can we address God in a way that describes everything He is? What name included the many roles and attributes of God? Of course, we could simply use the term God or the Old Testament name Yahweh/Jehovah. However, we have a new name revealed to us – the name of Jesus! When we use the name of Jesus, we encompass everything that God is. Jesus is the revelation of Father, Son, and Spirit. Jesus summarizes all the compound names of Yahweh/Jehovah. Jesus is everything that God is. Whatever roles or manifestations God has, they are all in Jesus (Colossians 2:9). We can and should use the name of Jesus for God Himself, for it denotes the totality of God's character, attributes, and self-revelation.

Is “Elohim” In Genesis 1:26 Plural? Does That Prove A Trinity?

The name commonly used for God in the Old Testament is the Hebrew word Elohim (plural form). It is also found in the singular form El and Elah. Whenever we find the English word “God” used in the Old Testament, it is a translation of this Hebrew word Elohim, or one of its forms.

-https://www.blueletterbible.org/faq/don_stewart/don_stewart_1303.cfm (Retrieved 12/10/18)

The fact that Genesis 1:26 uses the plural Hebrew term “Elohim” for God, and that it uses clear plural pronouns (such as “us” and “our”), regarding the creation of man, has led some Trinitarians to conclude that this passage implies that God is a plurality of persons. Let’s examine this in closer detail...

“And God (Hebrew “Elohim” – Strong’s #H430) said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.” -Genesis 1:26

Does this apparent plural usage prove a Trinity of god-persons?

It is important to first note that the Bible uses singular pronouns to refer to God hundreds of times, with this plural usage in Genesis 1:26 being remote from the norm. The plural usage is found in only several select instances.

So, let's begin to explore this question...

-Examination of "Elohim":

Those having a basic understanding of the Hebrew language understand that most Hebrew words written in English having an "-im" ending indicate plurality. Genesis 1:26 is sometimes used by Trinitarians to imply that this demonstrates an "Old Testament hint of the Trinity." Is this a correct concept, or does this apparent plurality refer to something else?

When understanding Scripture, sometimes the best action to take initially is to keep reading. So, continuing to the next verse, Verse 27, we read the following...

"So God (again, Hebrew "Elohim," plural) created (Hebrew "bara'," singular – Strong's #H1254) man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them."

-Genesis 1:27

So, the first thing to note is that the very next verse uses extremely clear singular pronouns to describe this very event. Additionally, in order to gain insight into the intended meaning of this passage, it is critical to understand the verb usage involved. If you have a plural noun with a singular verb, it makes the noun usage or sense singular.

The Hebrew word for "create" in this passage is "bara," and is singular. So even though the noun seems to be plural, it is to be

understood as singular due to the singularity of the verb. Make note that in Hebrew, a word that is plural in form does not always indicate a plurality in meaning or sense. A careful investigation of the actual use of this word in the Scriptures will unequivocally show that Elohím, while plural in form, is singular in concept. In Biblical Hebrew, many singular abstractions are expressed in the plural form, for example, rachamím, “compassion” (Genesis 43:14, Deuteronomy 13:18); zequním, “old age” (Genesis 21:2; 37:3, 44:20); n’urím, “youth” (Isaiah 54:6, Psalms 127:4).

-<http://jewsforjudaism.org/knowledge/articles/joseph-smiths-translation-of-genesis-11/>
(Retrieved 2/04/18)

That the plural form of Elohím does not at all imply a plurality of gods is a fact also attested to by the ancient Greek version of the Scriptures, the Septuagint, which renders Elohím with the singular title “ho Theos” (“the God”).

-ibid. (Retrieved 2/04/18)

Some Trinitarians attempt to claim that a “composite unity” is implied in the word Elohím, which they then try to apply the Trinitarian doctrine to. Nevertheless, even if that was the case, it would do no good in proving their doctrine, as the notion of “distinct persons” within the Godhead is the main point of contention, and this is found nowhere within the text of Genesis 1:26. To their credit, most Trinitarian apologists recognize this and therefore do not use Genesis 1:26 to argue their case.

So then, what is the reason for the plural usage in Hebrew? Plurality here does not emphasize the “plurality of persons” in the Godhead. Most scholars agree that the reason why Elohim takes the plural form in the Hebrew is because it is used to express the multitude of strength, power and might of God.

-Bernard, “The Oneness of God,” p. 147.

Flanders and Cresson explained that the plural usage in Hebrew has a certain function other than to indicate plurality:

“The form of the word, Elohim, is plural. The Hebrews pluralized nouns to express greatness or majesty.”

-Henry Flanders Jr. and Bruce Cresson, “Introduction to the Bible,” New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1973, p. 48, n. 8.

The Jews certainly do not now, nor ever did see the plural form as compromising their strong monotheism. The Bible itself reveals that the only way to understand the plural form of Elohim is that it expresses God’s majesty and not a plurality in the Godhead, by its insistence on one God, by its use of singular verbs with Elohim, and by its use of Elohim in situations that definitely portray only one person or personality. Let’s discuss some examples of this last one...

The Israelites use the word *elohim* for the golden calf they made in the wilderness (Exodus 32:1, 5, 8, 23, and 31), yet the Biblical account makes it clear there was only one golden calf. The Old Testament also uses *elohim* to refer to singular pagan gods such as Baalberith, (Judges 8:33), Chemosh (Judges 11:24), Dagon (Judges 16:23), Baalzebub (2 Kings 1:2-3), and Nisroch (2 Kings 19:37). The Bible even

applies Elohím to Jesus Christ (Psalm 45:5, Zechariah 12:8-10; 14:5), and no one suggests there is a plurality of persons within Jesus.

-Examination of the Plural Pronouns:

Now that we have a basic understanding of the term Elohím, there is a second question that arises which we will now address. What is the reason that “us,” and “our,” two clearly plural pronouns are used regarding the creation of man in Verse 26?

As we begin, it is interesting to note that these plural pronouns do not appear in any of the creation verses before or after this. They only occur with the creation of man, but yet the following verse (Verse 27), which also refers back to the same subject matter, makes it clear that God is singular in the use of the singular pronouns “he” and “him.” So, Verse 26 uses plural pronouns when it depicts God apparently talking to some others, and Verse 27 depicts God as the singular creator of man in its summary of Verse 26. So then, why the plural pronouns in Verse 26? Who are they referring to? Who could God be talking to, if we have learned that “elohím” is singular by way of the singular verb “create – bara”?

There are several possibilities in this regard. However, before we get into the specifics, it is critical to first point out that any interpretation of Genesis 1:26 that permits the existence of more than one person of God runs into severe difficulties downstream. Isaiah 44:24 later says that the Lord created the heavens alone and created the earth by Himself. There was only one Creator according to Malachi 2:10. These both agree with Genesis 1:27, which clearly summarizes the

creation activities of Verse 26 as being done by a singular Elohim. Furthermore, if the plural in Genesis 1:26 refers to the Son of God, how do we then reconcile this with the Scriptural record that the Son was not born until thousands of years later in Bethlehem? The Son was made of a woman (Gal. 4:4); if the Son was present in the beginning, who was His mother? If the Son was a spirit being, who was His spirit mother?

So then, if a Trinity of god-persons is not the answer, then what does this passage likely mean? Although commentators have suggested a number of possibilities, the most likely answer is that God was addressing the angels during the creation of man. The several other Scriptural passages in which a plural is used could also be explained in this way.

The only beings created at this point were the angels (Job 38:4-7), so it would make sense to understand them to be the recipients of God's address. In fact, the word *elohim* itself, in Scripture, is often used to refer to angels (Strong's #H430).

-Strong, p. 1467.

The Jews have always interpreted this passage (as well as others that also show God using plural pronouns) to mean that God spoke to the angels at creation.

-<https://jewsforjudaism.org/knowledge/articles/when-god-said-let-us-make-man-in-our-image>
(Retrieved 2/21/22)

When you search the Scriptures, you will find that when God speaks of "us" or "our," He is normally addressing His angels while speaking

using a stylistic device referred to as the “majestic plural.” One Christian website defines the majestic plural as follows...

“The majestic plural is also known as the ‘royal we.’ This term refers to the use of a plural pronoun when speaking of oneself. ... The majestic plural is a stylistic device used to give honors to nobility. One of the most memorable...comes from Queen Victoria, who would say, ‘We are not amused,’ when turning up her nose at a tasteless joke.

Using the majestic plural indicates power and greatness. ... The Latin language has another term for the majestic plural, which is ‘pluralis majestatis,’ or ‘the plural of majesty.’ This construction does not exist solely in Latin or English, but also in ancient Hebrew, Punjabi, Telugu, Hindustani, and Egyptian Arabic.”

-<https://www.compellingtruth.org/majestic-plural.html> (Retrieved 3/13/22)

In fact, only two chapters later, God continues to use the pronoun “us” as He speaks with the angels. At the end of the third chapter of Genesis, God relates to His angels that Adam and his wife have eaten from the Tree of Knowledge and as a result, has “become like one of us”, knowing good and evil. God then instructs his angels, known as Cherubim, to stand at the entrance of the Garden of Eden brandishing a flaming sword to prevent mankind from re-entering the Garden and eating from the Tree.

“And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:
Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.

So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.”

-Genesis 3:22-24

Similarly, in the Tower of Babel story in Genesis 11, we see that God used a plural (“let us go down and confound their language” in Verse 7), but then in Verse 8 it is clear that God Himself (singular) went down and scattered the languages. This is almost identical to Genesis 1:26-27, where Verse 26 has the plural pronoun, but Verse 27 makes it clear that a singular “Elohim” (God) performed the creation.

“Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech.

So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city.”

-Genesis 11:7-8

Additionally, we find God addressing His heavenly court in Isaiah 6:8, clearly addressing the angels as “us”...

“Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” -Isaiah 6:8

The following excerpt from 1 Kings gives us a glimpse of God speaking to His angels in His heavenly court regarding their mutual intervention in actions taking place on earth...

“And he said, Hear thou therefore the word of the Lord: I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left.

And the Lord said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramothgilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner.

And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will persuade him.

And the Lord said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so.

Now therefore, behold, the Lord hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the Lord hath spoken evil concerning thee.” -1 Kings 22:19-23

Furthermore, the famous Psalm 82 “divine council” passage gives us a look into God’s heavenly court, as He addresses the “gods,” or *elohim* – referring to an angelic council. These angels, who were assigned to oversee the 70 nations of mankind are rebuked by God for their wickedness, injustice, and overall poor job...

“God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods (Hebrew: *elohim*).

How long will ye judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked? Selah.

Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy.

Deliver the poor and needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked.

They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness: all the foundations of the earth are out of course. I have said, Ye are gods (Hebrew: elohim); and all of you are children of the most High. But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes. Arise, O God, judge the earth: for thou shalt inherit all nations.”
-Psalm Chapter 82

We see God in His heavenly court chastising the angels that were placed over the nations – addressing them as “elohim.”

Note: For more on this, see the work of Dr. Michael Heiser.
-<https://thedivinecouncil.com/ETS2010Psalm82.pdf> (Retrieved 2/10/22)

So, the consistent interpretation is to understand the plural pronouns in Genesis 1:26 (“Let us make man in our image, after our likeness”) to refer to God speaking to the angels while using the majestic plural. God created man in the image of Himself, an image shared by the angels also. It seems best to see the term “image,” in which man was created, as meaning one of moral, spiritual, intellectual, and emotional qualities, moreso than just physical qualities or similarities (we will discuss this more shortly). God and angels both possess all of these attributes that men were given.

This does not imply that the angels actually performed the creation in some way independent of God, but rather that God informed them of His plans out of courtesy and respect – or even that He included them in some way that we are unaware of. Only God can create out of nothing, but He may have included the angels in the activity of making mankind in a way similar to how a master artist or builder may utilize

his subordinates. Let's keep in mind that, like we pointed out earlier, the Verse 27 makes it clear that God Himself (singular form) actually performed the creation – not the angels.

The following quote from a popular Trinitarian “Christian answers” website admits the exact conclusions we’ve come to here...

“In the Bible, we find four verses in which God refers to Himself using plural pronouns. The most well-known passage is Genesis 1:26: ‘Then God said, ‘Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness.’ See also Genesis 3:22; Genesis 11:7; and Isaiah 6:8. The One God is speaking of Himself in plural form: “us” and “our.” This is a perfect example of the majestic plural. God’s divine greatness and transcendence are emphasized through the simple use of pronouns.

The majestic plural is also found in one of God’s most common names in the Old Testament, Elohim. The word itself is plural (the singular is Eloah), and it is sometimes translated as ‘gods’ (when referring to a plurality of false gods). When it refers to the One True God, Elohim (plural) is correctly translated as ‘God’ (singular).

Deuteronomy 4:35 says, ‘The LORD is God’—literally, ‘Yahweh is Elohim.’ And the famous Shema says, ‘The LORD our God, the LORD is one.’ Again, we have the singular Lord coupled with the plural Elohim, and this time in a verse that is crystal clear that there is only one God. His name’s plural form indicates His sovereign supremacy, His matchless might, and His exceeding eminence.

We carefully note that the majestic plural in the Old Testament was not meant to teach the doctrine of the Trinity.”

-<https://www.gotquestions.org/majestic-plural.html> (Retrieved 3/13/22)

So, between Genesis 1:26’s usage of the plural Elohim and its usage of plural pronouns, we can simply understand this verse to be God speaking to the angels while using majestic pluralism. It’s that simple.

Now, to understand another layer regarding the plural exclusively being used concerning the creation of man, let’s examine the following explanation for some deeper insights...

You must recognize that at the creation of man, God “downloaded” the multi-components, qualities and characteristics of Himself into man. These include attributes of God not found in animals or any other of God’s earthly creations, identifying man as the “image creature” of God. These may include but are not limited to, passion, hatred, love, reason, joy, sadness, jealousy, and dominion. We understand these to be human qualities, but they are really God qualities. Scripture implies all of these as being emotions God experiences as well.

The image of God refers to the immaterial part of man even more than the physical. It sets man apart from the animal world and fits him for the dominion God intended him to have over the earth. It also enables him to be able to commune with his Maker. It is a likeness mentally, morally, and socially.

Mentally, man was created as a rational, volitional agent. In other words, man can reason and choose. This is a reflection of God’s

intellect and freedom. Anytime someone invents a machine, writes a book, paints a landscape, enjoys a symphony, calculates a sum, or names a pet, he or she is demonstrating the fact that we are made in God's image and likeness.

Morally, man was created in righteousness and perfect innocence, a reflection of God's holiness. God saw all that He had made, and called it "very good." Our conscience or "moral compass" is a vestige of that original state. Whenever someone writes a law, recoils from evil, praises good behavior, or feels guilty, he or she is demonstrating the fact that we are made in God's image and likeness.

Socially, man was created for fellowship. This reflects God's desire for relationship with man. God is love. But love needed a "beloved." Man was created to be that "beloved" and to engage in a love relationship with God. Every time someone marries, makes a friend, hugs someone, or buys someone a gift, he or she is demonstrating that we are made in God's image and likeness.

Part of being made in God's image is that Adam and Eve had the capacity to make free will choices. Although they were initially given a righteous nature, they made an evil choice, which allowed sin to enter the perfect creation. In so doing, Adam marred the image of God within himself, and he passed that damaged likeness on to all his descendants (Rom. 5:12). Today, we still bear the image of God (James 3:9), but we also bear the scars of sin. Mentally, morally, socially, and physically, we show the effects of sin.

This idea of man retaining the effects of sin encapsulates the whole purpose and necessity of salvation. God's plan to redeem mankind back to His image was accomplished through the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The good news is that when God redeems an individual, He begins to restore the original image of God, creating a new man in true righteousness and holiness (Eph. 4:24). Participating in the salvation plan that Jesus Christ made available will effectively make us new creations in the likeness of God (2 Cor. 5:17). Experiencing salvation according to the gospel method is the fundamental way we begin to undergo a transformation back into the true design, functioning and purpose of God. The details of this gospel plan will be discussed later in this study.

For more information closely related to this section, see the sections entitled, [Understanding Man In The Image Of God - Body, Soul And Spirit](#) (page 118), and [Man – Made in God's Image](#) (page 494).

Does “Echad” In Hebrew Imply A Composite Unity?

Without wavering, the Bible states that God is one. Some Trinitarians suggest that “one” in respect to God means one as a composite unity rather than absolutely one in numerical value. To support this theory, they appeal to the Hebrew word “echad” (Strong’s #H259), which the Bible uses to express the concept of one God. This Hebrew word – much like the word “one” in English, can refer to both one in unity (a collective noun) and one numerically.

-Strong, p. 1464.

But to conclude that this word supports a Trinitarian concept of a plurality that is “unified as one” is fallacious at best. One cannot argue for the existence of a Trinity from the fact that echad (like “one” in English) can modify a collective noun. Echad is of course a numerical adjective and naturally will sometimes be found modifying a collective noun – for example, “one group,” “one flock,” “one herd,” “one family,” etc. But obviously, the meaning of plurality is derived from the collective noun itself (for example, the nouns “herd,” “family,” etc., obviously convey a plurality) – and not from the modifier “one” or echad. If you said “one flock” or “one sheep” in English, it is obvious that the plurality comes from the noun “flock” or “sheep” rather than the word “one.” The same is true of echad in Hebrew.

There is nothing at all in the word echad that inherently suggests a plurality. Echad is simply the word “one” in Hebrew. In order to determine whether or not God is numerically one or a composite unity, we must look at what the Bible plainly says about God. As we have

been exploring so far, and as we will continue to see, the clear and simple teaching of the Bible is that God is one numerically.

Let's look some of the other Biblical examples of the word echad. In the vast majority of Biblical instances, echad is used in reference to numerically singular nouns. Some of these include the following...

- A list of Canaanite kings each designated by the word echad (Joshua 12:9-24)
- The prophet Micaiah (1 Kings 22:8)
- Abraham (Ezekiel 33:24)
- A list of gates each designated by echad (Ezekiel 48:31-34)
- The angel Michael (Daniel 10:13)

Certainly, in each of these cases, echad means one in numerical value. In view of the many Old Testament passages that unequivocally describe God's absolute oneness, it is evident that echad, when used to refer to God, does mean the absolute numerical oneness of His being. However, even if echad did convey a concept of composite unity, it would signify a composite unity of God's multiple attributes, rather than a cooperative union of distinct persons.

Further, if echad does not mean numerical oneness when used in reference to God, then we have no defense against polytheism, because three or more separate gods could be one in unity of mind and purpose. However, it is obvious that the intent of the Old Testament Scriptures is to deny polytheism, and it clearly does use echad to mean one in numerical value.

Why Did Jesus Pray?

Do the prayers of Christ indicate a distinction of persons between Jesus and the Father? This is another claim by some Trinitarians. The answer is very clearly, no. On the contrary, His praying indicates a distinction between the Son of God (Jesus' humanity) and God (His divinity). In other words, Jesus prayed in His humanity, not His deity. If the prayers of Jesus demonstrate that the divine nature of Jesus is different from the Father, then Jesus is inferior to the Father in deity. If Jesus prayed to God as a God-person, then His position in the Godhead would be inferior to the other "persons" since He was shown praying to them as a man does to God.

This one example effectively destroys the concept of a Trinity of coequal persons. How can God pray and still be God? By definition, God in His omnipotence has no need to pray, and in His oneness, has no other to whom He can pray. If the prayers of Jesus prove there are multiple persons in the Godhead, then one of those persons is subordinate to the other and therefore not fully or equally God.

What, then, is the explanation of the prayers of Jesus? Again, it is simply that the man Christ prayed to the eternal Spirit of God. God did not need help; only the man did. Hebrews 5:7 makes it clear that Jesus needed to pray only during "the days of his flesh."

During the prayer at Gethsemane, the human will submitted to the divine will. Through prayer, He as a human, learned to submit and be obedient to the Spirit of God (Philippians 2:8, Hebrews 5:7-8). This was not a struggle between two divine wills but rather the submission

of the human will to the divine will. As a man, Jesus submitted Himself to, and received strength from the Spirit of God.

Some may object to this explanation, contending that it means Jesus prayed to Himself. We do not say Jesus prayed to Himself, for this would incorrectly imply the man was the same as the Spirit. Rather, we say that the man prayed to the Spirit of God, while also recognizing that the Spirit dwelt in the man Christ in a way unique from any other.

At the end of it all, the choice is simple. Either Jesus as God prayed to the Father or Jesus as man prayed to the Father. If the former were true, then we have a form of subordinationism, or Arianism (an early heresy within church history), in which one person in the Godhead is inferior to another person in the Godhead. This would then actually be incompatible with Trinitarianism. This also contradicts the Biblical concept of one God, the fully deity of Jesus, and the omnipotence of God. If the second alternative is correct (that Jesus prayed as a man) – then no distinction of persons in the Godhead is necessary. The only distinction is between humanity and deity.

Any time it seems as though a passage of Scripture is implying multiple “persons,” regarding Jesus and the Father, it must be recognized that Jesus Christ, as a genuine human man, was able to interact with God in the same way as you or I. We must be careful to avoid confusing this with a conclusion of “multiple god-persons.” Additionally, we must recognize the multiplicity of God’s roles or manifestations to man (Father/Son/Holy Ghost, etc.). It should

never be interpreted to mean multiple persons, minds, wills, centers of consciousness, etc., within God.

Regarding the issue of Jesus praying, another example that is often misunderstood is Jesus' last cry on the cross – “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46). When you apply the same explanation we just offered, this passage too becomes easily understood. This prayer of Jesus on the cross does not mean that the Spirit of God had departed from His body, but that there was no help from the Spirit in His sacrificial death of substitution for sinful humanity. It was not one person of the Godhead being deserted by another, but rather the man Christ feeling the wrath and judgment of God upon the sins of humanity. In other words, what Jesus meant when He cried this, was that He had taken the place of sinful humans on the cross and was suffering the full punishment for sin.

Jesus was more than a courageous martyr and more than an Old Testament sacrifice, because He died in our place and experienced for a time, the death we deserved. On the cross, He tasted death for every person (Hebrews 2:9). This death was more than physical death; it also involved spiritual death, which is a separation from God that none of us have ever experienced (2 Thessalonians 1:9, Revelation 20:14) – which helps us understand why He felt that sense of extreme isolation from God.

The Son's Predestined Glory

One particular verse that is often used by Trinitarians to advocate for an eternally preexistent Son-person is John 17:5, in which Jesus in His prayer refers to the glory He had with the Father before the world began. Trinitarians believe this requires the understanding that two divine “god-persons” were dwelling together in eternity past, sharing glory. Although we have already briefly touched upon this verse in several previous sections, we will delve into it more deeply here. There are a number of ways in which this demonstrates the continual failure of Trinitarian interpretation.

First, we must immediately recognize that this claim invalidates itself just by the simple fact that Jesus is praying. In other words, as we detailed in the previous section, any time we find Jesus praying, we must recognize that He is doing so as a genuine human. Being a genuine human, Jesus prayed to God – just as we can. This was a part of the necessary human experience. It cannot be interpreted as one distinct “god-person” praying to a second distinct “god-person.” If it was, it would place the praying “god-person” in subordination to the other. This itself would contradict Trinitarian doctrine, as they advocate for the co-equality of the three persons. Furthermore, God doesn't need to pray. Prayer is unique to humans. And so, with this understanding in place, we can see how this argument by Trinitarians immediately falls flat without even any further explanation.

Secondly, we should also recognize that the Trinitarian interpretation breaks down due to the fact that an alleged coequal “God the Son” person would not need to ask for glory from another “god-person”

because a true immutable “god-person” can never be without His glory. Furthermore, Scripture states emphatically that God will not share His glory with another (Isaiah 48:11, et al.) An eternally preexistent coequal “God the Son” person should already have His own glory and should not need to involve God the Father.

Steven Ritchie writes...

“Trinitarian so-called exegesis affirms that John 17:5 says that the Son was given Divine Glory by the Father ‘before the world was’ created. Thus, Trinitarian scholars are expecting us to believe that a coequal God Person (the Son) was given divine glory from another coequal God Person (the Father) in heaven because one of the coequal God Persons would later become a man. Yet, if a God the Son Person was already a complete God Person before the incarnation, then it is nonsensical to believe that a coequal God Person could be given anything that was not already His in the first place.”

-<https://www.apostolicchristianfaith.com/post/2016/10/23/What-Glory-Did-Jesus-Have-With-The-Father-John-175> (Retrieved 3/12/22)

In order to correctly understand this passage, it must be understood in a manner consistent with the multitude of other clear Scriptural passages that use similar language to refer to God’s foreknown and foreordained plan for the Sonship – and not the eternal preexistence of “god-persons” sharing glory.

In an earlier section, we spent a great deal of time on this subject of Son’s involvement in the predestined plan of God (See sections entitled [Jesus Christ, The Eternal Son Or The Eternal God?](#), found

on page 50, [The Word](#), found on page 62, and [The Son's Predestined Glory](#), found on page 151.) These two sections actually provide the answers to correctly understanding this passage in John 17. But since this passage is so often used by Trinitarians to promote their views, we thought it would be helpful to discuss it further here. We will try to avoid repeating the same information as in those prior section. So, let's begin to take a deeper dive into this passage...

John 17 is often referred to as the "High Priestly Prayer of Jesus." It portrays a prayer of Jesus addressed to the Father, occurring immediately before His crucifixion and subsequent resurrection and ascension, the events which the New Testament often associate with His glorification. Understanding this context is key to being able to understand what Jesus meant when He asked the Father to glorify Him. So, let's keep that context in mind as we continue.

"These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee:

As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

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.

And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."

-John 17:1-5

We see that Jesus began His prayer in Verse 1 by saying, “Father, the hour is come, glorify thy Son.” What did Jesus mean by “the hour is come?” John 13:1 clearly shows that Jesus was referring to the hour of His death...

“Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.” -John 13:1

So, it is clear that the context of Jesus’ statement involved His impending death, which would be followed by His resurrection and then ascension, through which He would receive glorification. The following passage in 1 Peter confirms that Jesus’ glorification would take place after His sufferings and crucifixion...

“Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.”

-1 Peter 1:11

Later in this same chapter, Peter says that Jesus and His mission of redemption was a plan that had been foreordained before the foundation of the world, but came into being in these last times. He then connects Jesus’ receiving of glory with His resurrection from the dead...

“Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,

Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.”

-1 Peter 1:20-21

So, we can understand that the context of John 17:1 and John 13:1 prove that in 17:5, Jesus was speaking about being glorified in His resurrection, rather than asking for preexistent divine glory.

Furthermore, later on in this same prayer in John 17, Jesus actually promised this same glory to those of us who follow Him – again, proving that He was not referring to divine glory He held as a preexistent “god-person”...

“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:”

-John 17:20-22

So, Jesus also promised this same glory to His followers, as we are also promised glorification (or glorified bodies) through resurrection. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul discusses these promised glorified resurrection bodies that the believers will one day receive...

“So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption:

It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory:”

-1 Corinthians 15:42-43

Like the glorification of Jesus was predestined in the foreordained plan of God, so also are the promises made to those who would trust in Him – as we’re told in the following passage in 2 Timothy...

“Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,

But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel:”

-2 Timothy 1:9-10

If our eternal redemption was predestined to be given to us before the world began, then how much more could the glorification of Jesus be predestined to be given to Him at that same time? Clearly, this is the consistent interpretation that Scripture forces us to accept. To conclude otherwise is to read your own beliefs into the text, as there is absolutely no support for such beliefs elsewhere in Scripture.

So, the believer is promised this same glory. But Jesus also was predestined to receive glory and dominion in the receiving of an earthly kingdom which He would rule in the future, as this predestined plan continues toward its culmination. The prophet Daniel was shown this in Daniel 7...

“And there was given him (Jesus, the Son of Man) dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.”

-Daniel 7:14

Notice that this passage tells us that the Son of Man was given dominion, glory, and a kingdom well before that dominion, glory, and kingdom would actually be given to Him. Dominion and glory associated with the coming kingdom will be fulfilled after His Second Coming when He returns in glory to establish His Millennial Kingdom on earth. Yet, the prophet Daniel saw Him being given these things long before even the Incarnation. Clearly, he was given a prophetic glimpse into the future realization of God’s predestined plan, which culminates with the glory of the Son in His completion of this plan.

Therefore, we can also understand that Jesus’s glory, which He referred to in John 17:5, was not a glory held by co-equal “god-persons” in eternity past, but rather, referred to this predestined future glory that the Son of Man had in the plan of God.

Several of Jesus’ disciples were given a glimpse of Jesus coming in this future kingdom glory in what we call the Transfiguration...

“And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.

And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them.

And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them.”

-Mark 9:1-3

Luke’s account puts it as follows...

“And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering.

And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias:

Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.

But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him.”

-Luke 9:29-32

So, again, it is clear that this glory Jesus would receive was preordained in the plan of God – and at the Transfiguration, these disciples were given a glimpse of this future coming in glory. We find a summary of the end results of this predestined plan in the following passage in Philippians...

“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:

That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”
-Philippians 2:9-11

Notice that it all happens “to the glory of God the Father.” In other words, God’s predestined plan was to glorify Himself through the vehicle of the Son. Therefore, He manifested Himself in flesh as the Son in order to accomplish this plan that would ultimately bring glory to Himself. This is what Jesus meant in John 17:1 when He prayed “glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee:”.

So, it should be clear to us that the glory Jesus was asking for in this passage should be understood to mean the predestined glory He had in the foreordained plan of God, which would come about through His triumphal completion of it.

The Revelation Of Jesus Christ

The book of Revelation, written by the apostle John, is one of the most emphatic books in the Bible regarding the teachings of the deity of Jesus and the oneness of God. Unfortunately, many Christians fail to recognize that this final book of the Bible is not just a revelation of future events, but even more importantly a revelation of Jesus Christ – as John tells us in the very first verse of the book. He begins his writing with, “The Revelation of Jesus Christ...” The Greek word for “revelation” is apokalupsis (Strong’s #G602), (from which we get our English word “apocalypse”), and literally means “an unveiling, or an uncovering.”

-<https://biblehub.com/greek/602.htm> (Retrieved 3/12/22)

While the book certainly is an unveiling of prophetic things to come, we need to recognize that one of the primary purposes of the book is to reveal the true identity of Jesus Christ as God’s foreordained plan reaches its future climax. All serious student of the Bible and of Bible prophecy (or eschatology) should not only seek to understand these predictions, but even more importantly to understand the reason for these coming events: the unveiling of the true identity of Jesus Christ as the Almighty God for the entire world to see, as He brings His foreordained plan to completion.

The book of Revelation presents Jesus both in His humanity and in His deity. He is the Lamb slain for our sins, but He is also the Almighty God on the throne. It communicates to us that this was the foreordained plan of God from before the foundation of the universe...

“And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” -Revelation 13:8

In earlier sections, we spent a great deal of time discussing this foreordained plan that hinged in totality on the then-future manifestation of the Son who would receive predestined glory through the completion of this plan. The book of Revelation prophetically describes the final climax of this plan as it is brought to fulfilment. In doing so, it emphatically reveals the true identity of the Lamb, Jesus Christ, as being the one God Almighty, the Yahweh of the Old Testament, who came Himself in flesh in order to execute this plan. We will observe this clearly as we jog through the book.

We will observe a consistent theme detailed throughout the book – that being that it portrays one throne being in heaven and One who sits upon it (not three). John described this first in Revelation 4:2, as he was brought into the heavenly throne room...

“And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.

And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.” -Revelation 4:3-4

Undoubtedly, this One who sat on the singular throne is God, as we then find the four beasts around the throne addressing Him as “holy,

holy, holy, Lord God Almighty,” which then prompts the worship of the twenty-four elders...

“And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.

And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever,

The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.” -Revelation 4:8-9

So, we find the One on the throne being called the Lord God Almighty who liveth for ever and ever. When we compare this back to the description of Jesus in Revelation 1:5-18, we discover a remarkable similarity. Verses 5-7 make it clear that Jesus is the One speaking in Verse 8, and is also the subject of Verses 11-18. Let's first take a look at Verses 5-8 in order to note this incredible similarity...

“And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.

I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.”

-Revelation 1:5-8

If it isn't clear enough that the context of Verse 8 is Jesus speaking, Verse 11 then removes all doubt, as it is then repeated as Jesus instructs John to write down all of the things he will be shown and to send it (including Jesus' dictated epistles in Chapters 2-3) to the churches.

“Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches...”

-Revelation 1:11

Again, the subject of Verses 5-7 is the Lord Jesus Christ, which then carries over to Verse 8 and 11, in which Jesus speaks from the first person, calling Himself the Alpha and Omega, beginning and ending, which is, which was, and which is to come, the Almighty. Is this not, for all intents and purposes, identical to the previous excerpt we examined in Chapter 4, in which God, the One who sat on the throne was called the Lord God Almighty who liveth for ever and ever?

Furthermore, this same Person is then called the “Son of Man” in Verse 13, the “first and the last” in Verse 17. Verse 18 then calls Him, “he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, ...am alive for evermore,

Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.” Of course, this is all referring to Jesus Christ.

And so, from the first chapter in Revelation, we find that Jesus is the Lord, the Almighty who liveth for ever and ever, and the One who is, was, and is to come. Since the same descriptive terms and titles apply to Jesus and to the One sitting on the throne, it of course is clear that this One sitting on the throne is none other than Jesus Christ!

There is even further support for this obvious conclusion. Revelation 4:11 told us that the One on the throne is the Creator, and we know Jesus is the Creator (John 1:3, Colossians 1:16). Furthermore, Revelation 4:11 also tell us that the One on the throne is worthy to receive glory, honor, and power; and yet, we find in Revelation 5:12 that the Lamb, Jesus Christ, is worthy to receive power, riches, wisdom, strength, honor, glory, and blessing.

“Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.” -Revelation 5:12

Further yet, Revelation 20:11-12 tells us that the One on the throne is the Judge, but John 5:22 (and a number of other passages) tells us that Jesus is the Judge of all.

“And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.”

-Revelation 20:11-12

“For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son:” -John 5:22

It is easy for us to conclude then that Jesus must be the One on the throne in Revelation 4, as well as throughout the book.

Moving on, we then see in Revelation Chapter 5, a scene that describes One sitting on the throne in heaven with a scroll in His right hand. Verses 6-7 then depict a Lamb who comes and takes the scroll out of the hand of the One sitting on the throne. Trinitarians often attempt to use this as a proof-text that shows two divine “god-persons.” However, as we will see, this attempt is futile.

We must remember that while we certainly advocate literal Bible interpretation where appropriate, the book of Revelation is highly symbolic, and we must remain sensitive to that fact. In fact, as we can easily see, this passage in question is highly symbolic and that must be kept in mind when deriving meaning.

First, John did not see the actual invisible Spirit of God sitting on the throne, since as John himself wrote, no one has ever done so nor can do so (John 1:18, 1 John 4:12, 1 Timothy 6:16). In addition, Verse 5 says a “Lion” (the Lion of the tribe of Judah) would open the scroll, yet in

Verses 6 and following, we see a Lamb come and open the scroll. Verse 6 also says the Lamb was slain, and yet John saw it move. We're then given a description of the Lamb as having seven eyes, symbolizing the sevenfold Spirit of God. It also had seven horns, symbolizing the fullness of God's power (since horns in the Bible normally symbolize power – Zechariah 1:18-19, Revelation 17:12-17). As we can see, every description in this scene is symbolic in nature.

To understand this scene, we must define these symbols by what we've been clearly told in other parts of Revelation or Scripture. For instance, as we've already discussed, Revelation 4:2 tells us that the One on the throne is the Lord God Almighty, which, as we concluded earlier, can only refer to Jesus as the one true God in all His power and deity.

The Lamb is identified as the Son of God – Jesus Christ in His humanity, or Incarnation – particularly emphasizing His sacrificial role. The New Testament is clear on the identification of Jesus as the ultimate sacrificial Lamb of God who offered His blood for our sins (John 1:36, 1 Peter 1:19). That is why this passage in Revelation describes the Lamb as “slain.” God could not and did not die; only the man Christ died. Deity cannot die.

And so, the Lamb clearly reflects the humanity of Christ. We see this clearly all through this chapter, as the entire point is to describe the Lamb as our human “kinsman Redeemer” – the only one who is able to open the scroll and redeem the earth. The opener of necessity had to be a true human, since original sin was introduced by humans (Adam and Eve). So, the Lamb represents the humanity of Christ.

We can then conclude that the vision John saw in Chapter 5 symbolically depicts the deity and the humanity of Jesus Christ. As Father, Judge, Creator, and King, He sits upon the throne, for in His deity, He is the Lord God Almighty. As the human Son, He appears as a slain Lamb, for in His humanity He is the perfect sacrifice slain for our redemption. And so, it should be clear that Revelation 5 reveals the oneness of God by featuring Jesus in His deity and also His manifestation as the human Son. It reinforces the consistent New Testament theme that the one God came in flesh as the Lamb (the Son) to reveal Himself to us and purchase our redemption with His own blood.

As we move on, the last chapter in Revelation (22:3-4) speaks again of the singular throne of God and the Lamb. These verses speak of one throne, one face, and one name. Therefore, again, God and the Lamb must be one Being.

“And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:
And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.”
-Revelation 22:3-4

We see that God “and” the Lamb have one throne, and are then described with three singular personal pronouns, making it clear this is speaking of one Being. The only Being who is both God and the Lamb is Jesus.

Then, later in this chapter, it identifies the Lord God of the holy prophets as Jesus...

“And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done.”

...

I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.”

-Revelation 22:6 and 16

So, Verse 6 tells us that the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to testify of the coming events, but then Verse 16 shows Jesus speaking in the first person, saying that it was He who sent His angel to testify of these things. Again, Revelation clearly shows us that Jesus (the Lamb) is none other than the one God Almighty.

It is clear from the book of Revelation that when we get to heaven, we will see Jesus alone on the throne. Jesus is the only visible manifestation of God we will ever see in heaven. Revelation declares that Jesus is the God of eternity and that He will appear with His glorified human body (the Lamb) throughout eternity. God's glory will be the light for the New Jerusalem as it shines through the glorified body of Jesus.

“And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.” -Revelation 21:23

So, these closing chapters in Revelation describe how God will reveal, or unveil Himself in all His glory to everyone forever. They tell us that Jesus is the everlasting God throughout eternity. We can absolutely agree with John's statement in the very first verse of this book: it is indeed a prophetic foretelling of the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Theophanies

Let's now briefly address the subject of the Biblical theophanies in relation to the topic of the Oneness of God. A theophany is a visible manifestation of God, typically describing Old Testament events where God appeared in a human form outside of the Incarnation.

Since God is omnipresent, He can manifest Himself to different people in different places, even simultaneously. It does not take a concept of more than one God or person within God to explain any of the theophanies. The one God can manifest Himself in any form, at any time, and in any place.

These theophanies were temporary, and for a specific purpose. They should not be confused with the Incarnation, in which God manifested Himself in human form as a genuine human, undergoing the full human experience, minus sin.

Old Testament References To The Son

Let's discuss another common misunderstanding regarding the nature of God. There are a number of references to the Son in the Old Testament. If the Son did not come into being until His birth in Bethlehem, as Oneness adherents believe, then there are some questions we need to answer. Do these pre-Incarnation references signify a personal duality in the Godhead, as Trinitarians often suggest? Do they prove a preexistent Son, as they also claim? Are they examples of "conversations between the god-persons in the Trinity?" Let's take a quick look at some these passages in order to answer these questions.

Psalm 2:2 speaks of the Lord and His anointed. Psalm 2:7 says, "I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee." Psalm 8:4-5 speaks of the son of man. Psalm 45:6-7 and Psalm 110:1 also contain well-known references to Jesus Christ, the former describing Him both as God and as an anointed man and the latter describing Him as David's Lord. Isaiah 7:14 and Isaiah 9:6 also mention the Son. So then, what is the answer? Do these verses indicate a pre-existent and distinct "God the Son" person? Further yet, do some of these passages involve "conversations between the members of the Trinity," as Trinitarians believe?

The answer is actually quite simple. When reading these verses of Scripture, you will find that each is prophetic in nature. Chapters 1 and 2 of Hebrews quote every one of these passages in the Psalms

and describe them as prophecy fulfilled by Jesus Christ as the anticipated Messiah of the Old Testament.

Thus, the passages in the Psalms are not actual conversations between two persons in the Godhead but rather, are prophetic portraits of God and the man Christ. They describe God begetting and anointing the man Christ (Psalm 2:2-7), the man Christ submitting to the will of God and becoming a sacrifice for sin (Psalm 45:6-7), and God glorifying and giving power to the man Christ (Psalm 110:1). All of this came to pass when God manifested Himself in flesh as Jesus Christ. The passages in Isaiah are also clearly prophetic, since they are in the future tense.

In sum, the Old Testament references to the Son look forward into the future to the day when the Son would be begotten. They do not speak of two Gods or two persons in God but rather of the future humanity in which God would incarnate Himself (the role/manifestation/relationship of the Son). So, as usual, the only distinction of “persons” is between the deity of God and the humanity of Christ. One God Person and one man person.

Similarly, other Old Testament references to the Messiah are also prophetic and also represent Him both as God and man (Isaiah 4:2, 42:1-7, Jeremiah 23:4-8, 33:14-26, Micah 5:1-5, Zechariah 6:12-13). Any duality in these verses of Scripture indicates a distinction between God and the humanity of the Messiah, and is perfectly in harmonious with the way Christ is portrayed as the one God made flesh in the New Testament.

Holy, Holy, Holy

In this and the following several sections, we will continue to address some common claims of Trinitarians. In this section, we will take a quick look at the common assertion that the Old Testament usage of the phrase “holy, holy, holy” implies the Trinity. Let’s see if this claim has any validity...

Does this threefold repetition in Isaiah 6:3 somehow hint that God is a Trinity of persons? This theory is not very credible for a number of reasons. According to Hebrew scholars, double or triple repetition was a common ancient Hebrew literary practice, and it occurs many times in Scripture. Essentially, it was used to give added emphasis.

-William D. Barrick, “Review of ‘The Book of Revelation’ by Hindson,” in Richard L. Mayhue, ed., “The Master’s Seminary Journal,” Vol. 13 No. 2, Sun Valley, CA: The Master’s Seminary, Fall, 2002, p. 284.

For example, Jeremiah 22:29 says, “O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord.” Certainly, this verse of Scripture does not indicate three earths. We can easily conclude that “holy, holy, holy” strongly emphasizes God’s holiness and does not imply a plurality of persons.

Furthermore, also keep in mind that throughout Scripture, it consistently refers to God as the “Holy one,” and never “holy two” or “holy three.” If “holy, holy, holy” was to be interpreted as a reference to a triune deity, the nonexistence of any passages referring to a “holy three” must be considered conspicuous by its absence.

The Lord God And His Spirit

In this short section, we will also examine a common false claim by those trying to find a concept of multiple god-persons in Scripture. This misunderstood phrase “the Lord God, and his Spirit,” is found in Isaiah 48...

“Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I: and now the Lord God, and his Spirit, hath sent me.”

-Isaiah 48:16

This phrase in Isaiah 48:16 does not indicate two god-persons any more than the phrases “a man and his spirit” or “a man and his soul” indicates two men. This is common Biblical phrasing. For example, the rich fool spoke to his soul (Luke 12:19), but this does not mean he consisted of more than one person.

“Lord God” means the sum total of God in all His glory and transcendence, while “his Spirit” refers to that aspect of Him with which the prophet had come into contact and which had moved upon the prophet. The very next verse (Isaiah 48:17) speaks of the “Holy One of Israel,” not the holy two or holy three. Isaiah 63:7-11 talks about the Lord and “his holy Spirit,” while Isaiah 63:14 speaks of “the Spirit of the Lord.” Clearly, no personal differentiation exists between Spirit and Lord. The Lord is a Spirit, and the Spirit of the Lord is simply God in action in relation to humanity/His creation.

The Fellow Of Yahweh

Another phrase commonly misapplied by Trinitarians describes the “fellow of Yahweh.” In Zechariah 13, God refers to “the man that is my fellow,” leading Trinitarians to see a pre-Incarnation reference to the alleged “eternal Son,” as well as support for “distinct god-persons.” Are these legitimate conclusions? Let’s first read the passage and then examine these claims...

“Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.”
–Zechariah 13:7

In Zechariah 13:7, the Lord spoke of the Messiah and called Him “the man that is my fellow.” The key to understanding this verse of Scripture is to realize that the Lord described a “man.” That is, He was prophetically referring to Christ, saying that this man would be His companion, or one close to Him. This verse does not describe one God calling another God “my fellow God.” This is even plainer in the NIV and NET. The former translates the phrase as “the man who is close to me,” while the latter has it as “the man who is My associate.” Only the sinless man Christ Jesus could approach the holy Spirit of God and be truly close to God. That is why 1 Timothy 2:5 says...

“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;” –1 Timothy 2:5

Of course, through Christ, we can all achieve fellowship with God.

Two Witnesses?

Another passage commonly used by Trinitarians as evidence of a Trinity is found in John 8, in Jesus' reference to the testimony of two witnesses – the Father and Son – which they claim confirms multiple god-persons. Let's take a look at this exchange between Jesus and the Pharisees and see if this claim holds water...

“And yet if I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me.

It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me.” –John 8:16-18

Just prior to these verses, Jesus had said, “I am the light of the world” (Verse 12). This was an assertion of His Messianic role (Isaiah 9:2, 49:6). The Pharisees replied, “Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true” (John 8:13). In response to their accusation, Jesus explained that He was not the only witness but that there were two witnesses to the fact that He was the Messiah, the Son of God. These two witnesses were the Father (the divine Spirit) and the man Jesus.

In other words, both God the Father and the man Jesus could testify that the Father was manifested in flesh, in Jesus. Jesus was both God and man; both the eternal God and the mortal man could verify this truth. No distinction of persons in the Godhead was necessary. If someone holds that the two witnesses were distinct persons in a Trinity, he would need to explain why Jesus did not say there were three witnesses. After all, the law required two witnesses but asked

for three if possible (Deuteronomy 17:6, 19:15). Where was the Holy Spirit – the supposed “third person of the Trinity?”

When Jesus referred to His Father, the Pharisees questioned Jesus about the Father, no doubt wondering when the Father had witnessed to them. Instead of saying the Father was another person in the Godhead, Jesus proceeded to identify Himself with the Father – the “I Am” of the Old Testament (John 8:19-27). The two witnesses were the Spirit of God and the man Christ, and both testified that Jesus was God in the flesh. So, again, we can easily understand the true meaning of this passage without any need for envisioning multiple persons within the Godhead.

Communication Of Knowledge Between Persons In The Godhead?

Let's examine yet another common claim. Much like our earlier discussion on Jesus praying, some Trinitarians believe certain passages in the Bible describe transfers of knowledge between distinct persons in the Godhead. This is a dangerous argument because it implies there could be one person in the Godhead who knows something that another person does not know. It implies a doctrine of separate personalities and minds in God, which is descriptive of tritheism or polytheism.

Also, it challenges the omniscience (all-knowingness) of God, which is clearly taught in Scripture. Further yet, this view itself would technically be contradictory to orthodox Trinitarian teaching, which maintains that the persons of God are co-equal. Can they truly be co-equal if certain of them have knowledge deficiencies? If that were the case, they all could not be omniscient, which, like we just said, contradicts their own theory of coequality among the god-persons. We must safely conclude that this view of communications of knowledge between alleged members of the Trinity is non-biblical, and in actuality, is even non-Trinitarian.

Let us look at some passages of Scripture that may need more explanation.

Matthew 11:27 says...

“All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.”

–Matthew 11:27

Trinitarians sometimes claim that the first phrase in this verse – “all things are delivered unto me of my Father” – indicates a transfer of knowledge between God the Father and God the Son. But instead, this verse simply states that no one can understand who the Son (the manifestation of God in flesh) is, except by divine revelation (from the Father). Jesus undoubtedly had this in mind when He told Peter...

“flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.” –Matthew 16:17b

Yet, we are told that no one can say Jesus is Lord, unless by the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:3). Clearly, we understand that the Father revealed His nature and character to humans through the Incarnation – Jesus Christ, the Son of God – and is at work enlightening our understanding through the work of the Spirit. So, the full council of Biblical teaching on this subject clearly describes the oneness of God while working through three primary manifestations.

Another often misunderstood passage is Romans 8:26-27, which says...

“the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us,”

And...

“he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit.”

–Romans 8:26-27

The common claim by Trinitarians is that the Spirit making intercession indicates the Holy Spirit person of the Trinity communicating with the Father. They also often believe that “he that searcheth the hearts” is a different person from the “mind of the Spirit.”

But instead, these statements indicate only a plurality of functions of the Spirit. On one hand, God placed His Spirit in our hearts to teach us to pray and to pray through us. On the other hand, God hears our prayers, searches and knows our hearts, and understands the prayers He prays through us by the intercession of His own Spirit.

This passage does not imply a separation of God and His Spirit, because God is a Spirit. Neither does it indicate a separation of Christ as the searcher of hearts from the Spirit as intercessor, because the Bible also says Christ makes intercession for us (Hebrews 7:25, Romans 8:34), and the Spirit searches all things, including our hearts (1 Corinthians 2:10-11). So, we again can clearly see how these passages harmonize with the rest of Scripture without the need for multiple god-persons.

Plural Usages In John

Let's address another issue that often confuses people. A number of times in the New Testament, Jesus referred to the Father and Himself in the plural. These passages are mainly found in the Book of John, the New Testament writer who more than any other, identified Jesus as God and the Father incarnate.

It is wrong for any reader to conclude that these plural usages mean that Jesus is a different person in the Godhead from the Father. However, it does indicate a distinction between the deity (Father) and humanity of Jesus Christ (Son). At this point in our study, hopefully dispelling these common misunderstandings is now becoming second nature to you, since almost all can easily be understood by using this same simple explanation. With that said, we can clearly comprehend the following sayings by Jesus from the Gospel of John...

- “Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also.”
-John 8:19
- “And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.”
-John 8:29
- “He that hateth me hateth my Father also.”
-John 15:23

- “but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.” –John 15:24b
- “and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.” –John 16:32b

These verses of Scripture use the plural to express a consistent theme: Jesus is not just a man, but He is God also. Jesus was not merely an ordinary man as He appeared to be outwardly. He was not alone, but He had the Spirit of the Father within Him. This simply explains the humanity of Christ and reveals the oneness of God. These above passages all exemplify this.

How was the Father with Jesus? The explanation is that He was in Jesus. Jesus was God (a Spirit) in the form of a genuine man. Therefore, if we know Jesus, we know the Father, who is a Spirit. Similarly, if we see Jesus, we see the Father, and if we hate Jesus, we hate the Father. Jesus was simply the Father in a visible human form. 2 John 1:9b states...

“He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.” -2 John 1:9b

What is the doctrine of Christ? It is the doctrine that Jesus is the Messiah; He is the God of the Old Testament manifested in flesh. In other words, John wrote that if we understand the doctrine of Christ, we will realize that the true identity of Jesus is the Father manifested as the Son. When we accept the doctrine of Christ, we accept both

the Father and the Son. It is also true that if we deny the Son, we are denying the Father, but if we acknowledge the Son, we have acknowledged the Father also (1 John 2:23).

One other passage with a plural, John 14:23, deserves special attention...

“Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” –John 14:23

The key to understanding this verse is to realize that Jesus was not speaking of His bodily entrance into us. If there are two Spirits of God – one of the Son and another of the Father – then there would be at least two Spirits in our hearts. However, Ephesians 4:4 declares there is one Spirit. We know John 14:23 does not mean bodily entrance because Jesus only a few verses earlier had said...

“At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.” –John 14:20

Certainly, we are not “in” Jesus in the sense of the physical. So, what does this passage mean? It means a union – one in mind, purpose, plan, and life – with Christ. This is the same idea expressed in John 17:21-22 when Jesus prayed...

“That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:” –John 17:21-22

Even so, why did Jesus use the plural in speaking of the believer’s union with God? Of course, God had designed salvation in order to reconcile the believer with Himself. However, sinful humans cannot approach a holy God, and finite humans cannot comprehend an infinite God. The only way we can be reconciled to God and understand Him is through His manifestation in flesh, through the sinless man Jesus Christ. When we are one with Jesus, then we are one with God, since Jesus is not just a man, but God also. Jesus used the plural to emphasize that in order to be united with God we must first receive the atonement through the blood of Jesus. There is one mediator between humanity and God, the man Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 2:5). No one comes to God except through Jesus Christ (John 14:6). To be doctrinally correct, we must acknowledge that Jesus is God come in the flesh (1 John 4:2-3). When we receive Christ, we have received both the Father and the Son (2 John 1:9). Our union with the Father and Son is not a union with two persons in the Godhead but simply a union with God through the man Christ...

“To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself,”
-2 Corinthians 5:19a

Another way to think of our union with God is to remember the two different offices or relationships represented by Father and Son. The believer has available to him the qualities of both roles, such as the omnipotence of the Father and the priesthood and submission of the Son. He has both the Father and the Son. The believer does not

receive multiple Spirits, but rather one Spirit. The bodily indwelling of the believer by God is called the gift (or baptism) of the Holy Spirit, and this gift makes all the attributes and roles of God available to us...

“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.”

-2 Corinthians 12:13

If, on the other hand, a person was to interpret John 14:23 and 17:21-22 to describe the union of two distinct persons in the Godhead, then to be consistent, he would have to interpret this (“that they also may be one in us”) to also mean that believers become members in the Godhead just as Jesus supposedly is. Clearly, since that is not the case, these passages above allude to the union with God that the Son of God had and that we also can enjoy by believing and obeying the gospel. Of course, Jesus is also one with the Father in the sense that He is the Father incarnate, but this is not the sense these particular verses of Scripture are focusing on.

Matthew 28:19

One particular passage very commonly misapplied by Trinitarians is Matthew 28:19. This passage reads as follows...

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:”

–Matthew 28:19

This is a passage commonly cited by Trinitarians to attempt to validate the belief in multiple persons in the Godhead. Does it in fact endorse a Trinity of distinct persons? Let’s look further at this passage of Scripture in order to determine if this is truly a “Trinitarian” passage.

In this passage, Jesus is recorded commanding His disciples to baptize “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” This is one instance in which reading with precision is enlightening. This verse does not teach that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are three distinct persons. Rather, it teaches that the titles of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost identify one name and therefore one being. The verse expressly says “in the name” (singular), not “in the names” (plural). Clearly this passage identifies one singular God who functions in (at least) three different roles towards humanity. Notice no actual “name” is given in this passage. However, from reading the New Testament, we learn that Jesus is the revealed name of God.

Even more specifically, the name Jesus is the name of the Father (John 5:43, Hebrews 1:4), the Son (Matthew 1:21), and the Holy Ghost

(John 14:26). This is why the New Testament Church always, without exception, is recorded obeying this passage by baptizing in “Jesus’ name,” rather than the titles.

In other words, the disciples-turned-apostles to whom this verse was spoken, correctly applied this instruction in their baptisms of new converts, knowing that the one name alluded to here was the Lord Jesus Christ. Never is there recorded even one baptism in the Bible where the titles “Father, Son and Holy Ghost” are invoked. We then must conclude that either the Apostles misapplied Jesus’ instructions, or the modern-day Trinitarians are. For more information on this subject, please refer to the section entitled [In What Name Is Baptism Performed?](#), found on page 339.

Furthermore, the authenticity of the phrase “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” from this passage in the original manuscripts is highly suspect, being considered by numerous Biblical experts as a later Catholic-inspired addition. It appears nowhere else in Scripture, and is considered highly uncharacteristic of the tenor of Jesus’ speech as well as the other New Testament authors. And as we just mentioned, early baptisms were not carried out by the Apostles in the way modern Trinitarians apply this verse. For numerous references concerning this phrase being a later Catholic addition, please refer to the section entitled [Historical Evidence Disproving The Trinitarian Baptismal Formula](#), found on page 355.

1 John 5:7

Another passage we need to devote special attention to is 1 John 5:7 – a passage also commonly misunderstood by mainstream Christian denominations. The passage reads...

“For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.”

-1 John 5:7

1 John 5:7 is another passage that at first glance appears to have a Trinitarian “feel” to it. Let’s examine it in further detail to discern the truth.

Although this verse of Scripture is often used by those who believe in three persons of God, it actually refutes this view, for it says that “these three are one.” Some interpret this phrase to mean one in unity as husband and wife are one. But it should be pointed out that this view is essentially polytheistic. If the word one referred to unity instead of a numerical designation, then the Godhead could be viewed as many gods in a united council or government. If unity was meant, it would make more sense for the verse to have read, “These three agree as one.”

It is also interesting to note that this verse does not use the word Son, but rather Word. If Son was the special name of a distinct person in the Godhead, and if this verse was trying to teach distinct persons, why did it use Word instead of Son? Son does not refer primarily to deity, but Word does. Son in Scripture always implies the humanity of

Jesus. The Word is not a distinct person from the Father any more than a man and his word are distinct persons. Rather, the Word is the thought, plan, and/or mind of God and also the expression of God.

In a similar way, the Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit is not a distinct person from the Father any more than a man and his spirit are distinct persons. "Holy Spirit" just describes what God is, and normally refers to God in action towards humanity/His creation. 1 John 5:7 says that three bear record in heaven; that is, God has recorded Himself in three modes of activity or has revealed Himself in three ways. He has at least three heavenly roles: Father, Word (not Son), and Holy Ghost. These three roles describe one God: "these three are one."

We have just explained 1 John 5:7 in a way that is consistent with the rest of Scripture. However, there is practically unanimous agreement among Bible scholars that the words "in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one," along with the beginning of Verse 8, were not part of the original Bible manuscripts. All major translations since the King James Version have omitted it, including the Revised Standard Version, The Amplified Bible, and the New International Version, as well as the primary Greek text (Nestle's text). The NIV renders 1 John 5:7 as, "For there are three that testify: The Spirit, the water and the blood; and these three are in agreement."

The KJV included Verse 7 only because the 1522 edition of the Greek text compiled by Erasmus included it. Originally Erasmus had excluded this passage from his editions of 1516 and 1519 because it was not in any of 5,000 Greek manuscripts but only in late manuscripts of

the Vulgate (the Latin version then used by the Roman Catholic Church). When the Catholic Church put pressure on Erasmus to include this verse, he agreed to do so if they could find even one Greek manuscript that had it. They finally produced one, so Erasmus reluctantly added the verse even though the manuscript they produced dated from 1520 (only 2 years earlier).

-Norman Geisler and William Nix, "A General Introduction to the Bible," Chicago: Moody Press, 1968, p. 370.

From this evidence, it seems plausible that some overzealous copyist saw "there are three that testify" and decided to insert an additional little teaching of his own. Certainly, the passage in question is completely unrelated to the rest of John's discussion here and interrupts the flow of his logical argument.

Although all of the evidence indicates this portion was not originally part of 1 John, God had His hand of protection and preservation on His Word. Despite the efforts of humans, God did not allow the passage to contradict His Word. Whether a person believes that 1 John 5:7 was originally part of the Bible or that it was a later interpolation, it does not teach three persons of God but rather reaffirms the Bible's consistent teaching of one indivisible God with various roles, relationships, or manifestations.

Pauline Salutations And The Use Of “Kai”

Another often misunderstood concept arises from the apostle Paul's use of the Greek word “kai” in his writings. Most of the epistles contain a greeting that mentions God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. For example, Paul wrote, “Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and (kai) the Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 1:7), and “Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and (kai) from the Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 1:3). Does this phraseology indicate a distinction of persons as Trinitarians often suggest? If they were interpreted to mean a distinction of persons, there would be several serious problems with which to contend.

First, why is there no mention of the Holy Ghost in these greetings? Even if these greetings are interpreted to teach multiple persons, they do not endorse the doctrine of the Trinity. Using this interpretation, the greetings could teach Binitarianism (two persons only); they could also relegate the Holy Ghost to a junior role in the Trinity.

Second, if we interpret other similar passages to indicate distinct persons in the Godhead, we could easily have four persons in the Godhead. For example, Colossians 2:2 speaks of the “mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ.” Other verses of Scripture talk about “God and the Father” (Colossians 3:17; James 1:27) or “God and our Father” (1 Thessalonians 1:3). 1 Thessalonians 3:11 says, “Now God himself and our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you.” So, if “and” separates different persons, we have

at least four persons: God, the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost.

If the salutations do not indicate a plurality of persons in the Godhead, what do they mean? By referring to the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, the writers were emphasizing two roles of God and the importance of accepting Him in both roles. Not only must we believe in God as our Creator and Father, but we must accept Him also as manifested in the flesh through Jesus Christ. Everyone must acknowledge that Jesus is come in the flesh and that He is both Lord and Christ (Messiah). Consequently, the salutations emphasize belief not only in God, which the Jews and many pagans accepted, but also in God as revealed through Christ.

This also explains why it is unnecessary to mention the Holy Ghost specifically. The concept of God as a spirit was wrapped up in the title of God the Father, especially to the Jewish mind. We must remember, too, that the doctrine of the Trinity did not develop until much later in church history. Therefore, these phrases did not sound the least bit awkward or strange to the writers or the readers.

But perhaps most importantly, understanding the meanings and usages of the Greek word “kai” helps to easily clear up any confusion here. The word “kai” (Strong’s #G2532) doesn’t necessarily mean “and” in the sense of “in addition to.” It can also be translated as “even” (meaning “that is” or “which is the same as”). For example, you could say, “He was the Messiah, even Jesus.” Furthermore, this word can be used to mean “namely” – again, conveying a meaning of the

same person initially mentioned – not someone different. For example, you could say, “He was the Messiah, namely, Jesus.”

-Strong, p. 1637.

For a Biblical example, the KJV translates *kai* as “and” in 2 Corinthians 1:2 but as “even” in Verse 3. Verse 2 says, “From God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ,” while Verse 3 says, “God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The KJV translates *kai* as “even” in several other places, including the phrases “God, even the Father” (1 Corinthians 15:24; James 3:9) and “God, even our Father” (1 Thessalonians 3:13). So, the greetings could read just as easily, “From God our Father, even the Lord Jesus Christ.” To further support this, the Greek does not have the definite article (“the”) before “Lord Jesus Christ” in any of the salutations. Thus, even if we translate *kai* as “and,” the phrases literally read, “from God our Father and Lord Jesus Christ.” This completely changes the meaning of the phrase.

We then without difficulty conclude that the salutations do not indicate any distinction of persons in God. At the most, the use of *kai* in these cases denotes a distinction of roles, manifestations, or titles/names by which humans know God. But it is critical to also understand that the use of *kai*, if understood to mean “even,” actually identifies Jesus as the same being as God – the same being as the Father. Additionally, the absence of the definite article (“the”) before “Lord Jesus Christ” in any of the salutations makes it extremely clear that the intention of the author was to identify the Lord Jesus Christ as the same being as God the Father.

Does The Baptism Of Christ Prove A Trinity?

One of the most commonly misinterpreted segments of Scripture involves the story of the baptism of Christ. Trinitarians very commonly use it to advocate for the doctrine of the Trinity. Let's take a look at the main passages that they point to, found in Matthew 3...

“And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” –Matthew 3:16-17

It is commonly stated by Trinitarians that this passage alludes to the alleged three distinct persons of the Trinity. They believe that the presence of Jesus (the Son), the Spirit of God descending like a dove (the Holy Spirit) and the voice from heaven (the Father), indicate a Trinity comprised of three persons.

To understand this scene, we must remember that God is omnipresent. Jesus is God and was God manifested in flesh while on earth. However, He could not and did not surrender His omnipresence while on earth, as that is one of His basic attributes, and God does not change. Of course, the physical body of Jesus was not omnipresent, but His Spirit was. Furthermore, although the fullness of the Godhead was present in the body of Jesus, it would be incorrect to imply that it was confined to His body. The correct Scriptural understanding is that the world itself in fact cannot contain God. With the omnipresence of God in mind, we can easily understand

the baptism of Christ. It was not at all difficult for the Spirit of Jesus to speak from heaven and to send a manifestation of His Spirit in the form of a dove even while His human body was in the Jordan River.

The voice from heaven and the manifestation of the Spirit as a dove have definite purpose and meaning, as did Jesus' baptism. Jesus was not baptized for the remission of sin as we are, because He was sinless (1 Peter 2:22). Instead, the Bible says He was baptized to fulfill all righteousness (Matthew 3:15). He is our example and He was baptized to leave us an example to follow (1 Peter 2:21).

Moreover, Jesus was baptized as a means to manifesting Himself, or making Himself known to Israel (John 1:26-27, 31). In other words, Jesus used the baptism as the starting point in His ministry. It was a public declaration of who He was and what He came to do. For example, at Christ's baptism, John the Baptist learned who Jesus was. He did not know that Jesus was really the Messiah until the baptism, and after the baptism he was able to declare to the people that Jesus was the Son of God and the Lamb who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29-34).

How did the dove further this purpose? John 1:32-34 clearly states that the dove was a sign for the benefit of John the Baptist. Since John was the forerunner of Yahweh (Isaiah 40:3), he needed to know that Jesus was really Yahweh come in flesh. God had told John that the One who would baptize with the Holy Ghost would be identified by the Spirit descending upon Him. Of course, John was incapable of seeing the Spirit of God anointing Christ, as it is invisible, so God chose a visible sign resembling a dove to represent His Spirit. Thus,

the dove was a special sign for John to indicate the identity of Jesus Christ as Yahweh in flesh as the Messiah. Additionally, the dove signified a type of anointing for the beginning of Christ's ministry. Jesus, being God Himself and a sinless man, was officially anointed for His ministry not by symbolic oil, as in the Old Testament, but by the genuine Spirit of God in the form of a dove.

The voice came from heaven for the benefit of the people. John 12:28-30 records a similar incident in which a voice came from heaven and confirmed the deity of Jesus to the people. Jesus said it came not for His benefit, but for the people's sake. The voice was God's way of formally introducing Jesus to Israel as the Son of God.

The baptism of Jesus does not teach us that God is made up of three persons, but reveals the omnipresence of God and the humanity of the Son of God as the Messiah. When God speaks to four different people in four different places simultaneously, we do not think of four persons of God, but of God's omnipresence. God did not intend for the baptism to give the monotheistic Jewish onlookers a new revelation of a plurality in the Godhead, and there is no indication that the Jews interpreted it as such. Even many modern Trinitarian scholars correctly see the baptism of Christ as a reference to "the authoritative anointing of Jesus as the Messiah" – and not as an indication of a Trinity.

-“The New Catholic Encyclopedia,” Art. “Trinity, Holy (In the Bible),” New York: McGraw Hill, 1967, 14:306.

God Is The Holy One

An important thing to point out is that God is never described in Scripture as being a holy two, or holy three. He is only ever described as being the Holy One. Let's examine some of these passages...

“Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? even against the Holy One of Israel.” -2 Kings 19:22

“Then should I yet have comfort; yea, I would harden myself in sorrow: let him not spare; for I have not concealed the words of the Holy One.” -Job 6:10

“For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.” -Psalm 16:10

“I will also praise thee with the psaltery, even thy truth, O my God: unto thee will I sing with the harp, O thou Holy One of Israel.”
-Psalm 71:22

“For the Lord is our defence; and the Holy One of Israel is our king.”
-Psalm 89:18

“To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? Saith the Holy One.” -Isaiah 40:25

So, it remains clear to us that God is always described in clear terms of absolute numerical oneness.

The Basics Of Trinitarianism

Throughout this study, great effort has been made to present the Biblical view of the identity of God. Throughout this study, we have made reference to the erroneous doctrine called Trinitarianism. Since it is currently the mainstream accepted view of the Godhead in what is generally considered mainstream Christianity, it is important that we take some time to trace its historical development and understand some of the problems and ambiguities inherent in this doctrine.

According to the Catholic Encyclopedia, Trinitarianism is the belief in three distinct persons within the Godhead - namely, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

-<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15047a.htm> (Retrieved 12/20/17)

Different people have described these three somewhat differently. Some advocate for a belief that the three share the same essence but have different minds, wills, bodies, and activities. Others describe them as three distinct essences but all moving and acting according to one mind or will to accomplish a composite purpose. The doctrine of the Trinity has developed and changed over the course of history, but orthodox belief holds the principle that these three persons within the Godhead are co-equal in power and authority, while also being co-eternal (existing eternally together in past, present, and future).

-Van Harvey, "A Handbook of Theological Terms," New York: MacMillan, 1964, p. 245.

Trinitarians view each person as having unique characteristics – the Father as unbegotten, the Son as begotten, and the Spirit as proceeding.

-Otto Heick, "A History of Christian Thought," Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965, 1:160.

Trinitarians often say that uniqueness of the Father is displayed in creation, that of the Son in redemption, and that of the Spirit in sanctification – yet, all three actively share in each work with varying stress of functions. Since each participates in the work of the others, there is no clear distinction on that basis.

One typical explanation of the Trinity is that of the triangle. Each point is said to represent one of the persons, and the triangle as a whole represents the triune God. Thus, the Father is not the Son is not the Holy Ghost. None without the others is fully God, but the three together represent the whole of the triune God.

Problems Inherent In A Belief In Trinitarianism

In this section, we will go through a number of doctrinal problems that exist within the framework of Trinitarian theology. Many of these you should be familiar with, as we have already touched on them throughout this study. Let's begin...

-Tritheism:

In the previous section, we familiarized ourselves with the basics of Trinitarian doctrine. We noted that one typical explanation of the Trinity is that of the triangle. Each point is said to represent one of the persons, and the triangle as a whole represents God. None without the others is fully God, but the three together represent the whole of God.

This explanation reveals an immediate problem with Trinitarianism. The belief in three distinct persons in God would obviously designate classic tritheism (the belief in three gods). Any orthodox Trinitarian would quickly and adamantly deny a belief in tritheism. Yet, when asked to explain how there can be three distinct persons "within" God, they ultimately have to chalk it up to the inability of the finite human mind when trying to comprehend the infinite God. In other words, their belief is a mystery that even they themselves cannot explain or understand.

Webster's Dictionary defines the word "person" as "an individual human being" and "the individual personality of a human being."

-“Webster’s Third New International Dictionary of the English Language,” unabridged, eds. Philip Gove, et al., Springfield, MA: G.&C. Merriam, 1976, p. 1686.

Even if you allow that this definition can include God, it inescapably requires the belief that God is three. To say you believe in three distinct “persons” in God and then try to escape the obvious implications of tritheism by adding the disclaimer, “But those three are actually one,” doesn’t rescue one from clear logical tritheism. To claim to not believe in tritheism doesn’t mean your beliefs are not tritheistic simply because you deny admitting it. On top of that, to then refuse a legitimate explanation on the grounds of our finite minds not being able to grasp it, amounts to an evasion of epic magnitude!

It is important to recognize however, that this is not simply a dispute over the terminology of the word “person,” which of course, normally applies to humanity. Over the years, an abundance of Trinitarian believers have applied this belief in the form of undeniable tritheism. For example, the three Cappadocians of the fourth century (Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory Nazianzus and Basil of Caesarea) believed so emphatically in three persons that they even taught three personalities.

-Heick, 1:161.

Additionally, Boethius (c.480-c.524) defined “person” as an “individual substance with a rational nature.”

-Harvey, p. 182.

You might ask, if one was purposely describing tritheism, how might they describe it any differently? I can think of no other way. To simply add the disclaimer, “these three are one” does not allow denunciation of tritheism, based on this description of “persons.” This is shown clearly in Trinitarian depictions of the Godhead down through the centuries, as it is commonly shown as three men or a picture of an old man, a young man and a dove. Clearly, threeness is implied in every real sense of the word “three.”

-Subordinationism:

Any Trinitarian will also immediately deny any belief in subordination of one divine person to another in power or eternal existence. Yet, Trinitarians often say that God the Father is the head of the Trinity, God the Son is begotten by God the Father, and the Spirit is sent by either of the first two.

One of the inconsistencies in their criticism of Oneness teaching is that they often cite Jesus praying as evidence that there are distinct persons, as Jesus cannot pray to Himself. However, this obviously leads to subordinationism as well, as one part of God cannot be praying to another part of God and still both be co-equally God. One of the characteristics of God is that He doesn't need to pray. With regard to Jesus praying, we understand that He prayed as a man, not as God. This is in proper context understood as the humanity/divinity of Jesus Christ – and not multiple “god persons” praying to each other. It is imperative to recognize the true humanity of Jesus. Again, there is contradiction through the lack of consistency in this teaching. And again, Trinitarian adherents insist there is no contradiction due

to our finite minds not being able to grasp the fullness of meaning described by these relationships. So, it seems fair then to categorize their belief as being predicated on an absence of understanding.

When taking a clear look at Trinitarianism, you will find that throughout history, well-known Trinitarians have interpreted and taught doctrines that make Jesus Christ inferior or subordinate. Tertullian (160-220 A.D.) was the first to propose the doctrine of the Trinity. He taught that the Son was subordinate to the Father.

-Heick, 1:127.

Origen (c.185-c.254 A.D.), the first significant promoter of Trinitarianism in the Eastern church, similarly saw the Son as subordinate to the Father. He even went as far as to teach that prayer should be addressed to the Father only!

-Ibid., 1:117-118.

These men were in large part the foundation of early Trinitarianism. When referring to the Son, they meant the deity of Christ, meaning that when they taught that the Son was subordinate, they didn't mean by virtue of His humanity (as Oneness Christians believe). They believed the deity of the Son was subordinate to the deity of the Father. This allows the historically accurate statement that Trinitarianism originally began as a doctrine which made Jesus Christ a subordinate "god-person" to the Father.

In modern times, many Trinitarians use the human limitations of Christ to prove the distinction between the person of the Son and the

person of the Father. For example, they use Christ's prayers and His supposed lack of knowledge and power to prove the distinction. So, in effect, while advocating for the equality of the persons, they in a practical way, deny their own belief in this.

To clarify this belief in the Oneness view, it is important to understand that Oneness believers do believe that the Son was subordinate to the Father. But Oneness believers understand this is due to the fact that any time the "Son" is referenced, the humanity of Christ is also in view. In other words, the man Christ was subordinate to the Divine Spirit. Oneness believers view the role of the Son as being subordinate due to the inherent limitations involved in the incarnation as a human. So, it is the role of the Son that is subordinate to the role of the Father in accordance with the plan of God for redemption. However, Oneness adherents understand that Jesus was the Yahweh of the Old Testament (revealed to man then as the Father) in flesh. So, the essence that made Jesus God was not different or subordinate to the Father because they both were exactly the same.

This is not the way Trinitarians view the subordination of Jesus. By making Father and Son different persons, Trinitarians deny that Jesus is the Father incarnate, therefore not understanding the full deity of Jesus. This has huge implications, as in effect, their doctrine subordinates Jesus in deity rather than due to His humanity.

-Three:

It is dangerous to overly associate the number three with God. If it is used to designate eternal distinction in the Godhead, it leads to tritheism (a form of polytheism). If it is used to designate only the roles or manifestations God has, it limits God's activity in a way not done in Scripture.

God has shown the ability to manifest Himself in many more ways than three. God has revealed Himself to humans also as King, Lord, Bridegroom, Husband, Friend, Apostle, High Priest, Lamb, Shepherd and Word. It would be misguided at best, blasphemous at worst to declare that three manifestations towards humanity encompass all that God is. Remember, these are simply relationships designated for humanity's benefit. Humanity is not eternally pre-existent; therefore, it would make no sense for God to be a Father, Son, and Holy Ghost prior to the beginning of humanity. It would also make no sense to limit the being of God to these three manifestations, especially before humanity existed.

We cannot designate the number three as having a special significance with God in this way. We cannot limit His specific roles or titles. We also cannot subdivide Him, as He is one. Even His titles and roles overlap! For example, Trinitarians would say God has revealed Himself as the Father in creation, the Son in redemption, and the Holy Ghost in regeneration. However, God was the Spirit back at creation, and used His role of Holy Spirit to perform the creation. The Bible also says Jesus participated in creation, that is, the role of the Redeemer was already in view back at the creation. Additionally, since Jesus was the Father in flesh, it would not be inaccurate to say He created the world.

-Trinitarianism as a Mystery:

When confronted with the logical problems associated with the description of the Trinity, Trinitarians will ultimately claim their understanding of God to be a mystery to the human mind. However, the only mystery of godliness described in Scripture related to the fact that the God of the universe (a Spirit being) could take on flesh as a man and enter into His creation. And even this simple truth has been revealed to those who believe on Jesus. So, for a Bible-based Christian, there is no mystery. The Bible never constructs the position that there is a “mystery” that New Testament believers cannot perceive related to the basic nature of God. The mystery was to those who did not believe, for Paul clearly defined it for us, telling us that God was manifest in the flesh.

Furthermore, the word “mystery” (Strong’s #G3466) in Scripture conveys a bit of a different meaning than our modern concept of a mystery. In Greek, this usage of mystery referred to a divine truth previously unknown but has now been revealed.

-“Expository Dictionary of Bible Words,” p. 659.

The Bible never implies that the understanding of the Godhead is a mystery. It would be wrong therefore for us to imply that it transcends understanding when God has gone to such lengths to unambiguously give us the message of truth in His Word.

Obviously, our finite minds cannot comprehend all of God or His ways. However, we can understand the simple truth of God’s

oneness! Although God's ways may transcend human logic, He never contradicts true logic, nor is He illogical. His oneness is so strongly emphasized in Scripture that it eliminates any confusion or mystery regarding the subject!

-Non-Biblical Terminology:

Probably the greatest problem with Trinitarianism is simply the lack of Biblical support. The Trinitarian view of God is nowhere clearly found in the Bible. Any time it is supposedly found, it is extreme inference only on the part of the already Trinitarian reader. In other words, to interpret certain Scriptures the way Trinitarians do, requires that the reader already has firmly in place in his mind the doctrine of the Trinity and uses that as a lens by which he views the Scriptures.

Oneness believers on the other hand, interpret Scripture on the basis of the foundational teaching of God in the Old Testament and use that foundation to receive progressive revelation of God as manifested in the flesh in the New Testament. In other words, you must let the text interpret itself, rather than looking at it through the lenses of church tradition as developed over many centuries of history.

Let's look at some of the severe problems with Trinitarian terminology in regards to the Bible...

- The word "Trinity" is nowhere found in the Bible. Let us clarify that we don't reject the Trinity based on the word "Trinity" not

being found in the Bible but instead, it is the lack of the concepts behind the words that make Trinitarianism unbiblical.

- The word “three” doesn’t appear in relation to God in any translation of the Bible except the KJV. In the KJV, it is found only once, in 1 John 5:7, with its inclusion thought to have been absent in the original manuscripts. Even this doubtful passage never describes three distinct persons, but simply states, “These three are one.”
- The word “person” does not appear in relation to God either, aside from two passages. The first, Job 13:8 actually would refute Trinitarianism, as it speaks of God’s “person,” (singular) rather than “persons” (plural). The other exception is Hebrews 1:3, which says the Son is the express image of God’s own person (meaning nature or substance), not a second person. So, this passage also refutes the Trinitarian belief in three distinct persons. The Bible never uses the term “persons” to describe God.

As stated earlier, the Bible does not explicitly teach the doctrine of the Trinity. Any supposed expression of the Trinity found in the Biblical text is drawn out by inference only. In other words, it is a conclusion brought about by conjecture and presupposition. Many Trinitarian scholars essentially admit this firsthand.

“The New Catholic Encyclopedia” states...

“There is the recognition on the part of exegetes and Biblical theologians...that one should not speak of Trinitarianism in the New Testament without serious qualifications...New Testament exegesis is now accepted as having shown that not only the verbal idiom but even the patterns of thought characteristic of the patristic (church fathers) and conciliar (church councils) development would have been quite foreign to the mind and culture of the New Testament writers.”

-“The New Catholic Encyclopedia,” Art. “Trinity, Holy (In the Bible),” pp. 295-305.

Additionally, the Trinitarian Protestant theologian Emil Brunner stated...

“The doctrine of the Trinity itself, however, is not a Biblical doctrine and this indeed not by accident but of necessity. It is the product of theological reflection upon the problem...The ecclesiastical doctrine of the Trinity is not only the product of genuine Biblical thought, it is also the product of philosophical speculation, which is remote from the thought of the Bible.”

-Emil Brunner, “The Christian Doctrine of God,” Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1949, pp. 236-239.

So, as we can plainly see from the words of Trinitarian scholars themselves, this doctrine is not taught in the Scriptures, and was foreign to the minds of the apostles. Trinitarian doctrine requires and infers unscriptural concepts such as tritheism, subordinationism, and an eternal threeness in the Godhead. It also relies on Scripturally unsupported terminology, including the terms “trinity,” “three,” and “persons” used when describing God. If Trinitarianism isn’t Biblical, then where did it come from? We will begin to discuss this in the following section.

The Pagan Roots And Parallels Of Trinitarianism

If Trinitarianism has been shown to be unbiblical, as we touched on in the last section, then where did it come from? In this section, we will try to gain an understanding of the true roots of Trinitarianism by recognizing its many parallels with paganism (a term first used by early Christians for people in the Roman Empire who practiced polytheism).

If even Trinitarian scholars and sources admit that this doctrine does not explicitly come from the Bible, then one must ask where it does come from. Historically, there really is not much debate. It is clearly accepted that Christian Trinitarianism was a progressive development over the course of many centuries of church councils all taking place centuries after the New Testament was completed. This is plainly acknowledged in “The New Catholic Encyclopedia”...

“When one does speak of an unqualified Trinitarianism, one has moved from the period of Christian origins to, say, the last quadrant of the 4th century...From what has been seen thus far, the impression could arise that the Trinitarian dogma is in the last analysis a late 4th century invention. In a sense, this is true but it implies an extremely strict interpretation of the key words Trinitarian and dogma...The formulation ‘one God in three Persons’ was not solidly established, certainly not fully assimilated into Christian life and its profession of faith, prior to the end of the 4th century. But it is precisely this formulation that has first claim to the title ‘the Trinitarian dogma’.”

-“The New Catholic Encyclopedia,” Art., “Trinity, Holy (In the Bible),” pp. 295-305.

Trinitarians are not the first to conjure up a belief of three gods in

one. The search for the origins of the Trinity begins with the earliest writings of man. Records of early Mesopotamian and Mediterranean civilizations show polytheistic religions. However, the most common grouping of gods was a triad. We will demonstrate from the testimony of history that the Trinity was a significant and pervasive feature among the pagan religions and philosophies of the world and that its existence in mainstream Christianity today points back to this ancient, pagan origin.

Most of ancient theology is lost under the sands of time. However, archaeological expeditions in ancient Mesopotamia have uncovered the fascinating culture of the Sumerians, which flourished over 4,000 years ago. This area was later controlled by the Assyrian and Babylonian empires, and its gods lived on in those cultures that conquered. The historian S.H. Hooke tells in detail of the ancient Sumerian Trinity...

“Anu was the primary god of heaven, the ‘Father’, and the ‘King of the Gods’; Enlil, the ‘wind-god’ was the god of the earth, and a creator god; and Enki was the god of waters and the ‘lord of wisdom.’”

-S.H. Hooke, “Babylonian and Assyrian Religion,” Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma P., c1963, pp. 15-18.

The historian, H. W. F. Saggs, explains that the Babylonian triad consisted of...

“three gods of roughly equal rank... whose inter-relationship is of the essence of their natures.”

-H.W.F. Saggs, “The Greatness that was Babylon: A Sketch of the Ancient Civilization of the Tigris-Euphrates Valley,” New York: New American Library, 1968, p. 316.

Egypt's history is similar to Sumeria's in antiquity. In his "Egyptian Myths," George Hart, lecturer for the British Museum and professor of ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics at the University of London, shows how Egypt also believed in a "transcendental, above creation, and preexisting" one, the god Amun. Amun was really three gods in one. Re was his face, Ptah his body, and Amun his hidden identity.

-George Hart, "Egyptian Myths," Austin: Univ. of Texas, 1990, p. 24.

The well-known historian Will Durant concurs that Re, Amun, and Ptah were...

"combined as three embodiments or aspects of one supreme and triune deity."

-Will Durant, "Our Oriental Heritage," New York: Simon & Schuster, 1935, Vol. 1 of "The Story of Civilization," 11 Vols., 1935-75, p. 201.

Additionally, a hymn to Amun written in the 14th century B.C. defines this Egyptian triad as follows...

"All Gods are three: Amun, Re, Ptah; they have no equal. His name is hidden as Amun, he is Re... before [men], and his body is Ptah."

-Erik Hornung, "Conceptions of God in Ancient Egypt: The One and the Many," trans. John Baines, Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1982, p. 219.

Durant further concludes that...

"from Egypt came the ideas of a divine Trinity..."

-Will Durant, "Caesar and Christ," New York: Simon & Schuster, 1944. Vol. 3 of "The Story of Civilization," 11 Vols., 1935-75, p. 595.

Dr. Gordon Laing, former Dean of the Humanities Department at the University of Chicago, agrees that, “the worship of the Egyptian triad Isis, Serapis, and the child Horus” probably accustomed the early church theologians to the idea of a triune God, and was influential “in the formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity as set forth in the Nicæan and Athanasian creeds.”

-Gordon Jennings Laing, “Survivals of Roman Religion,” New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1963, pp. 128-129.

Trinities existed also in the pagan religions of the Far East – including Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism. David Bernard tells us that...

“Hinduism has had a supreme trinity from ancient times: Brahma the Creator, Shiva the Destroyer, and Vishnu the Preserver.”

-Bernard, p. 265.

Another scholar, John Noss, described this belief as follows...

“Brahman-Atman, the impersonal ultimate reality achieves a religiously significant threefold manifestation or trimurti [triad of gods] through the three personal deities who represent the divine functions of creation, destruction, and preservation respectively.”

-John Noss, “Man’s Religions,” 5th ed., New York: MacMillan, 1969, p. 202.

Taoism, the ancient mystical religion of China, has an official trinity of supreme gods: the Jade Emperor, Lao Tzu, and Ling Pao, called the “Three Purities.”

-Ibid., p. 268.

Buddhism also has a trinity of sorts. The Mahayana (northern) school of Buddhism has the doctrine of a “triple body” or “Trikaya.” According to this belief, there are three “bodies” of the Buddha-reality: the first is the eternal, cosmic reality; the second is the heavenly manifestation of the first; and the third is the earthly manifestation of the second.

-Ibid., p. 163.

The historical lecturer, Jesse Benedict Carter, tells us of the Etruscans. As they slowly passed from Babylon through Greece and went on to Rome, they brought with them their Trinity of Tinia, Uni, and Minerva. This Trinity was a “new idea to the Romans,” and yet it became so “typical of Rome” that it quickly spread throughout Italy.

-Jesse Benedict Carter, “The Religious Life of Ancient Rome: A Study in the Development of Religious Consciousness, from the Foundation of the City Until the Death of Gregory the Great,” New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1972, pp. 16-19, 26.

Even the names of the later Roman Trinity: Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva, reflect the ancestry. The fact that Christianity was not ashamed to borrow from pagan culture is amply shown by Durant, who said...

“Christianity did not destroy paganism; it adopted it.”

-Durant, “Caesar and Christ,” p. 595.

Dr. Gordon Laing convincingly devotes his entire book “Survivals of Roman Religion” to the comparison of Roman paganism and the Roman Catholic Church.

Dr. Jaroslav Pelikan, a Yale University Christian Orthodox scholar and professor, confirms the Church's respect for pagan ideas when he states that the Apologists and other early church fathers used and cited the (pagan) Roman Sibylline Oracles so much that they were called "Sibyllists" by the 2nd century critic, Celsus. There was even a medieval Catholic hymn, "Dies irae," which foretold the "coming of the day of wrath" based on the "dual authority of David and the Sibyl," demonstrating how pervasive paganism was in the early Catholic Church.

-Jaroslav Pelikan, "The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)," Chicago: Univ. of Chicago P., 1971, Vol. I of *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*. 5 Vols., pp. 64-65.

The attitude of the Roman Church toward paganism is best summed up in Pope Gregory the Great's words to a missionary...

"You must not interfere with any traditional belief or religious observance that can be harmonized with Christianity."

-Qtd. in Gordon Jennings Laing, p. 130.

In other words, the objective was to gain control in any way possible, rather than preserving truth of doctrine.

In contrast, Judaism is strongly monotheistic with no hint of a Trinity. The Hebrew Bible (the Tanakh, or Christian Old Testament) is filled with Scriptures such as "before Me there was no God formed, Neither shall any be after Me" (Isaiah 43:10), and "there is no other God...I am the Lord and there is none else" (Isaiah 45:14,18). A Jewish commentary affirms that...

“(no) other gods exist, for to declare this would be blasphemous...”

-“The Soncino Chumash,” ed. A. Cohen, 2nd ed., London: Soncino P., 1983, p. 458.

We can conclude without much difficulty that the concept of the Trinity did not come from Judaism. Nor did Jesus speak of a Trinity. To discover the origins of how the doctrine of the Trinity found its way into Christianity, we need to take a look at the circumstances in which early Christians found themselves. To do this, we need to start out by recognizing the pervasive influence of Gnosticism in the early church.

Gnosticism is a term that covers a wide range of religious thought in the first few centuries after Christ. It originated in paganism but adopted many Christian elements and became a major threat to Christianity by its increasingly pervasive influence as time passed. In general, Gnosticism held that spirit is good, matter is evil, salvation consists in deliverance of the spirit from matter, and salvation is achieved by means of a secret or higher knowledge (Greek, “gnosis”).

-Bernard, pp. 314-315.

Gnosticism, as applied to the Godhead and to Christology, held the following: The Supreme God was transcendent and unapproachable, but from Him came a series of progressively more inferior emanations (called aeons). The lowest of these aeons was Jehovah. Christ is one of the highest aeons. Since all matter is evil to them, Christ was a spirit being only and had only an apparent body (the doctrine of Docetism). Or, some taught that Christ was a spirit who temporarily associated with a man Jesus who died (the doctrine of Cerinthianism).

-ibid., p. 315.

Gnostic-inspired false teaching was already on the rise at the time the New Testament was being written. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonians saying, “the mystery of iniquity doth already work” (2 Thessalonians 2:7). Much of the New Testament – specifically certain epistles of Paul and the writings of John – was written as a refutation of Gnosticism.

Throughout his book “Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity,” the German New Testament scholar, lexicographer, and early church historian, Walter Bauer proves that Gnosticism heavily influenced early Christianity.

-Walter Bauer, “Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity,” trans. Philadelphia Seminar on Christian Origins, ed. Robert A. Kraft and Gerhard Krodel, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979.

Likewise, in his work “The Greek Fathers,” James Marshall Campbell, a Greek professor, and dean of The Catholic University of America, bears out the great concern of Gnosticism prevalent in the early church.

-James Marshall Campbell, “The Greek Fathers,” New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1963.

Gnosticism borrowed much of its philosophy and religion from Mithraism, oriental mysticism, astrology, magic, and Plato. The late Professor Arthur Cushman McGiffert interprets some of the early Christian fathers as believing Gnosticism to be...

“identical to (sic) all intents and purposes with Greek polytheism.”

-Arthur Cushman McGiffert, "A History of Christian Thought," Vol. 1, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1932, p. 50.

In addition to the influence of Gnosticism were other pressures of Greek thought. According to McGiffert, the concepts of Greek philosophy prevalent during the time of the early church were Stoicism, and Platonism.

-ibid., p. 46.

That these philosophies affected Christianity is a historical fact. What did these philosophers teach about God? In Plato's "Timaeus," a philosophical Trinity appeared, which became very significant in later neo-Platonism. Laing comments on this, saying...

"The Supreme Reality appears in the Trinitarian form of the Good, the Intelligence, and the World-Soul."

-Gordon Jennings Laing, p. 129.

Laing attributes elaborate Trinitarian theories to the Neo-Platonists, and considers Neo-Platonic ideas as "one of the operative factors in the development of Christian theology."

-ibid.

Note: Neo-Platonism is used to designate a tradition of philosophy that arose in the 3rd century A.D. in Athens and was heavily influenced by the earlier philosopher Plato.

-<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neoplatonism> (Retrieved 11/21/17)

In a comparison between the church of the 3rd century and that of 150-200 years before, the noted German theologian Adolf Harnack finds...

“few Jewish, but many Greco-Roman features, and...‘the philosophic spirit of the Greeks’.”

-Adolf Harnack, “History of Dogma,” trans. Neil Buchanan, 3rd German ed., 3 Vols., New York: Dover, 1961, 1:45.

In addition, Durant ties in Greek philosophy with Christianity in a statement about the Alexandrian church (Alexandria, Egypt was the main hub of Gnosticism and also home of many Gnostic-influenced Church Fathers such as Clement and Origen). He states that the early Alexandrian church...

“wedded Christianity to Greek philosophy.”

- Durant, “Caesar and Christ,” p. 613.

And finally, Durant writes of the famed pagan philosopher, Plotinus (the originator of Neo-Platonism in the 3rd century) that...

“Christianity accepted nearly every line of him...”

-Ibid., p. 611.

For instance, we know that these Greek philosophical ideas, particularly Platonic and neo-Platonic thought had a major influence on the development of the Logos doctrine (which suggested that the Logos, or “the Word” was a different person from the Father. As we will learn further ahead, this was one of the beginning form of early Binitarianism, in which the “Logos” (which eventually became equated to the Son) was subordinated to the Father. This was a major step in

the development of Trinitarianism, and the significant early promoters of the yet-undeveloped Trinitarianism promoted this. We will look into this in a later section.

So, with this background, the growth and evolution of the Trinity can be clearly seen. As previously stated, the Bible does not mention the Trinity and the ideas that it incorporates were foreign to the minds of the New Testament authors and 1st century believers. Bernard Lonergan, a Roman Catholic priest and Bible scholar, concurs that the educated Christians of the early centuries believed in a single, supreme God.

-Bernard Lonergan, "The Way to Nicea: The Dialectical Development of Trinitarian Theology," trans. Conn O'Donovan, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976, trans. "Of De Deo Trino," Rome: Gregorian UP, 1964, 17-112, p. 119.

As for the Holy Spirit, Arthur Cushman McGiffert tells us that early Christians considered the Holy Spirit...

"not as an individual being or person but simply as the divine power working in the world and particularly in the church."

-McGiffert, p. 111.

This early belief is in line with the modern beliefs of Oneness Christians. But the simplicity of the earliest Christians would soon be overcome in the majority by these distortions brought about by the encroaching influences of Greek philosophy and pagan thought.

In such a time was Christianity born. On one side were persecutions; on the other the seduction of philosophy. To remain faithful to the simple truths of Jesus Christ meant hardship and ridicule. In the

desire to grow, the mainstream church often began to compromise truth, which resulted in confusion as pagans became Christians and intermingled their beliefs and traditions. In his “Emergence of Catholic Tradition,” Dr. Pelikan discusses the conflict in the church after 70 A.D. and the decline of the Judaic influence within Christianity. As more and more pagans came into Christianity, they found the Judaic influence offensive. Some even went so far as to reject the Old Testament.

-Pelikan, pp. 13-14.

As the apostles died, various writers undertook the task of defending Christianity against the persecutions of the pagans. These writers are known to us now as the “Apologists” and early Church Fathers. Pelikan states that...

“it was at least partly in response to pagan criticism of the stories in the Bible that the Christian apologists... took over and adapted the methods and even vocabulary of pagan allegorism.”

-Ibid., p. 30.

James Marshall Campbell agrees when he states, “the Apologists borrowed heavily, and at times inappropriately, from the pagan resources at hand.” They began the “process of accommodation” between Christianity and common philosophy, to “justify Christianity to the pagan world.”

-Campbell, pp. 22-23.

As Greek influence and Gnosticism became introduced into the

Church, it became more mystical and philosophical. The simple doctrines that Jesus taught to the uneducated gave way to the complex and sophisticated arguments of the apologists. The world around the early church was changing.

With this backdrop of history in place, in the next section, we will begin focus our attention on the actual development of the doctrine of the Trinity in Christian history.

The Development Of Trinitarianism

As we begin this short exploration of the theology of the early church and the progressive development of Trinitarianism over the centuries, let's first establish one clear fact borne out by the record of history. That is, that the evidence shows that for the first several centuries A.D., Oneness believers (formally referred to as Modalistic Monarchians by scholars) were by far the most numerous, dominant, and mainstream belief within Christianity. Meanwhile, the Trinitarian doctrine did not replace Oneness doctrine as the dominant belief until around 300 A.D., and even then, it was not even fully developed into its modern "orthodox" form until well into the 5th century A.D. and following.

Additionally, Trinitarians often falsely allege that the 2nd and 3rd century writers who believed in a preexistent Son, or used the word "Trinity" were all orthodox Trinitarians. In reality, the writings of these men can at best be called "semi-Trinitarian" because most of them denied the later Trinitarian doctrines of coequality and co-eternality of the Son. In other words, what we know of today as orthodox Trinitarian doctrine had not yet arisen. Rather, these "semi-Trinitarians" of the 2nd and 3rd centuries were part of the beginning phases of the evolution of Trinitarianism. There were no orthodox Trinitarians yet. The doctrine had not yet developed in history until the centuries that followed.

The genuine facts of early pre-Nicene Christian history prove that the majority of the earliest post-Apostolic Christians were Oneness in their theology (Modalistic Monarchian) and that the Oneness

Modalists universally rejected the emerging semi-Trinitarian and semi-Arian teachings in the first few centuries.

What does Modalistic Monarchian mean? Oneness apologist Steven Ritchie says...

“The word ‘Modalistic,’ from the root word ‘Mode’ meaning ‘...a particular form or manifestation of an underlying substance.’ 1 Timothy 3:16 states that our ‘God was manifest in the flesh.’ Hence Modalistic teaching professes the belief that God is only one ‘hypostasis’ (substance or being) who manifests Himself in different modes of existence yet continues to eternally exist as one single Monarch.

The word Monarch is taken from two root words; mono, meaning one; and arch, meaning ruler. Hence a Modalistic Monarchian is one who believes in One God who is a sole ruler or monarch rather than three divine persons of a Trinity. This One Monarch has manifested Himself in different modes of operation while remaining One underlying Spirit or Substance. Thus, Jehovah God modally exists as Father (our Heavenly Parent), Son (The eternal Word of God the Father made flesh as our redeemer), and Holy Spirit (The Spirit of God the Father in action and emanation).”

-<http://www.apostolicchristianfaith.com/single-post/56d7068e0cf25a66a534bdfa>
(Retrieved 2/20/20)

This was the belief of the original Christians of the apostolic church. The doctrine of the Trinity on the other hand, evolved slowly over the course of several centuries and many church councils, not becoming “fully formed” until around 4-500 A.D. And like we already mentioned, it was not until the 300’s A.D. and following that

Trinitarian ideas displaced Modalism (or Oneness theology) as the dominant belief. In fact, it wasn't until the late 300's A.D. that Trinitarianism even displaced Arianism, which was another unbiblical belief that had arisen, claiming that Jesus was distinct and subordinate to God the Father.

Before discussing the progressive development of Trinitarianism, let's briefly establish some of what we've claimed thus far – namely, the absolute historical fact that Modalistic Monarchianism was the theology held by mainstream Christianity in the earliest times prior to the development of deviant beliefs such as Arianism and Trinitarianism. Consider the following points...

- Tertullian, (c. 150-225 A.D.) sometimes called the Father of Trinitarianism (although his beliefs were not reflective of modern orthodox Trinitarianism – he can at best be described as a “semi-Trinitarian”) was forced to admit that the majority of believers in the 2nd century A.D. were Oneness, or Modalistic Monarchian (and not Trinitarian) believers. He wrote the following...

“The simple, indeed, (I will not call them unwise and unlearned,) who always constitute the majority of believers, are startled at the dispensation (of the Three in One), on the ground that their very rule of faith withdraws them from the world's plurality of gods to the one only true God; not understanding that, although He is the one only God, He must yet be believed in with His own (economy). The numerical order and distribution of the Trinity they assume to be a division of the Unity... They

are constantly throwing out against us that we are preachers of two gods and three gods, while they take to themselves pre-eminently the credit of being worshippers of the One God;... We, say they, maintain the Monarchy...”

-Tertullian, “Against Praxeas,” Ch. 3.

(<http://earlychristianwritings.com/text/tertullian17.html> - Retrieved 3/3/20)

So, Tertullian admits that the majority of the earliest Christians, as well as the mainstream still during his time, were called “Monarchians” because they held to the belief that God is one indivisible Monarch rather than the belief that God is three divine persons (three Monarchs).

- Origen of Alexandria (c. 184-253 A.D.) gave us an important clue as to what the early Oneness Modalists had taught about “the Word” (the Logos) being the impersonal utterances of the Father deposited in words until the child was actually born as a Son later on in time.

In other words, he records that the Modalists rejected an eternal Son person, rather interpreting “the Word” in the same way we have in this study – as preexistent only in the foreordained plan of God and only came into substantial existence at His birth in Bethlehem. And Origen identifies these Oneness believers as still being “the general run of Christians” in other words, still the majority in the early-to-mid-3rd century.

In his Commentary on the Gospel of John, Book 1, Chapter 23, Origen wrote...

“I wonder at the stupidity of the general run of Christians (the Christian majority) in this matter. I do not mince matters; it is nothing but stupidity ... they proceed differently and ask, what is the Son of God when called the Word? The passage they employ is that in the Psalms, ‘My heart has produced a good word;’ and they imagine the Son to be the utterance of the Father deposited, as it were, in syllables ... they do not allow Him ... any independent hypostasis (substance of being), nor are they clear about His essence. I do not mean that they confuse its qualities, but the fact of His having an essence of His own.”

-Origen’s Commentary of the Gospel of John, Book 1, Ch. 23.

(<http://earlychristianwritings.com/text/origen-john1.html> - Retrieved 3/3/20)

Trinitarian historians readily admit that Origen’s commentary here is addressing the Modalistic Monarchians as “the general run of Christians” who rejected the newly developed belief about the Logos being distinct from the Father.

Origen further admitted that the Modalists believed that the Son is the same substance (hypostasis) of the Father (in Book 2) – a belief perfectly in alignment with what Oneness believers today still hold.

-Origen’s Commentary of the Gospel of John, Book 2.

(<http://earlychristianwritings.com/text/origen-john2.html> - Retrieved 3/3/20)

The next several points will demonstrate that even Trinitarian scholars often admit what we have already shown to be historically true: that the Modalistic Monarchians preceded the semi-Arian and semi-Trinitarian theological developments in church history.

- Adolph Harnack was a German Lutheran theologian and prominent church historian. He wrote that Modalistic Monarchianism was once “embraced by the great majority of all Christians...”

-Harnack, pp. 51-54.

- German Church historian Friedrich Loofs was a student of the renowned Adolph Harnack. Regarding the early pre-Trinitarian dominance of Modalism, Loofs wrote...

“...The Modalists were the successors to the apostles and not the Trinitarians. The Trinitarians expropriated the term ‘catholic’ (universal) from the writings of Ignatius. When they increased in power and in numbers, they branded the Modalists who preached one God as heretics, and styled their (own) group as ‘catholic’...”

-Friedrich Loofs, “The History of the Primitive Church,” trans. Ernest C. Messenger, London: Burns, Oates and Washburne, Ltd., 1949, 3:600.

- The famed Eastern Orthodox church historian, Jaroslav Pelikan, wrote that...

“Many of the passages in ancient Christian writers sound like Modalistic Monarchianism...”

-Pelikan, p. 177.

Then, in the same paragraph, Pelikan cited Ignatius of Antioch (40-113 A.D.) and Melito of Sardis (130-180 A.D.) to show that their writings sounded “like Modalistic Monarchianism” (ibid.).

Both of these men died before any belief equivalent to modern “orthodox” Trinitarianism had been developed.

In reference to his citing of these two early church fathers, Pelikan then admits that...

“Modalistic Monarchianism... turns out to have been a systematization of popular Christian belief in ancient Christian theology.”

-*ibid.*, p. 79.

If Trinitarian thought had been a “popular Christian belief in ancient Christian theology,” we can be certain that Pelikan would have pointed it out to us, as he is himself a Trinitarian. But he doesn't. To the contrary, he instead wrote that “Modalistic Monarchianism” was the “popular Christian belief” in “ancient Christian theology.” Why would renowned Trinitarian historians admit this, while never stating that the Trinitarian belief was “popular” in the early days of Christianity? Because it's the truth!

- Trinitarian Protestant author Harold Brown admitted that it is impossible to find true theological orthodoxy (meaning orthodox Trinitarianism) within the first two hundred years of Christian history.

“What we now call orthodoxy is a traditional understanding. Is it the correct one? The fact that heresy preceded orthodoxy and appears to have been suppressed and supplanted by it would seem to suggest the contrary.

...

It is impossible to document what we now call orthodoxy in the first two centuries of Christianity.”

-Harold O.J. Brown, "Heresies: Heresy and Orthodoxy In the History of the Church," Hendrickson, 1998, p. 5.

The context of Brown's introduction to his book affirmed that there was no true Trinitarian orthodoxy within the first two centuries of the Christian era. But let's think about his wording for a moment. His earlier statement admits that what he considers orthodoxy came after the popularization of heretical beliefs (such as Arianism). But if the order goes heresy -> orthodoxy, doesn't that mean that even before heresy there must have been the original doctrinal truths taught and observed by the apostles? A heresy is a departure from an original truth. And then isn't it obvious that those original doctrinal truths were deviated from in order to produce the heresy that then produced Trinitarian so-called "orthodoxy?"

This is an admission that Trinitarianism wasn't even close to being the original belief system of the apostolic church. In fact, if anything, it would seem to indicate that Trinitarian orthodoxy morphed out of a time period when heresy was becoming mainstream. The heresy of Trinitarianism simply beat out all the other competing heresies, and certainly displaced the original Christian theology of Modalism, or Oneness.

So, just these few points we've mentioned should be sufficient to demonstrate that the early Christians were Oneness believers. Although we don't have the time to adequately go through it here, we

can demonstrate the continual presence of Oneness believers throughout Christian history. But they can be adequately summed up in the incredible witness of the Reformation Era believer Michael Servetus (1511-1553) – an eminent physician from Spain. The Reformation produced many who opposed the doctrine of the Trinity in favor of Oneness beliefs, such as Servetus. Although some wrongly try to frame him as a Unitarian, Servetus' own writings refute this idea, as he plainly acknowledged Jesus as God (which Unitarians do not). Servetus was a Oneness believer, and his denial of the Trinity and the eternality of the Son made him despised by Catholicism and Protestantism alike. Servetus wrote...

“There is no other person of God but Christ... The entire Godhead of the Father is in him.”

-Encyclopedia Britannica, 1964, Art. “Servetus, Michael,” 15:371-372.

Servetus went as far as to call the doctrine of the Trinity a three-headed monster, saying it was a delusion of the devil that leads to polytheism. He also believed that because the church accepted Trinitarianism, God allowed it to come under the rule of the papacy and so to lose Christ. He couldn't understand why the Protestants would come out of Catholicism but still insist upon retaining the nonbiblical and man-made doctrine of the Trinity – a question that continues to puzzle Oneness believers to this day!

Michael Servetus was burned at the stake in 1553 for his beliefs, with the approval of the Reformer John Calvin (although Calvin made it clear that he would rather Servetus had been beheaded).

-Walter Nigg, “The Heretics,” New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962, pp. 324-328.

So, our conclusions are clear – Oneness doctrine was the mainstream, dominant view among early Christians, and Trinitarianism became a much later development. Let’s now begin our discussion of these developments, and investigate the deviations of early Christian doctrine. We will plainly see that the doctrine of Trinitarianism emerged after Modalism and was a belief system that developed slowly over time over the course of many years and many church councils lead by men. Let’s begin...

-The Post-Apostolic Age:

The Christian writers of the post-Apostolic Age (c. 90-140 A.D.) adhered closely to Biblical language, usage, and thought. They affirmed the characteristic Oneness themes of strict monotheism, the absolute deity of Jesus Christ, and the true humanity of Christ. They attached great significance to the name of God and alluded to baptism in the name of Jesus. They did not describe God as a trinity or as three persons, nor did they use any other distinctively Trinitarian language. Many of their statements are incompatible with orthodox Trinitarianism and instead appear to be distinctively compatible with today’s Oneness views.

As church historians readily admit, these writings of the post-Apostolic fathers express no clear concept of a trinity. Trinitarian author Calvin Beisner admitted the following...

“In the earliest times of the Church, there is little explicit or precise statement, and even less definition of the doctrine of the Trinity...

[In the first two centuries] the primary thought was of monotheism.”
-Calvin Beisner, “God in Three Persons,” Wheaton, Ill: Tyndale, 1984, pp. 47-48.

Similarly, Trinitarian (Lutheran) professor Otto Heick stated...

“The post-Apostolic fathers adhered tenaciously to monotheism in the Old Testament sense... These thoughts [about God] are mainly of Old Testament and Jewish origin, and exhibit little Hellenistic [Greek] influence.”

-Heick, 1:46-47.

Even The New Catholic Encyclopedia, describing Trinitarianism during this time, admitted...

“Among the Apostolic Fathers, there had been nothing even remotely approaching such a mentality or perspective; ...A Trinitarian solution was still in the future.”

-“The New Catholic Encyclopedia,” Art, “Holy Trinity,” pp. 295-305.

The writers during this post-Apostolic Age, such as Polycarp, Ignatius, Papias, and Clement of Rome are compatible with Oneness doctrine, but statements in Ignatius, II Clement, and Hermas are clearly incompatible with Trinitarianism. A writing called the Didache contains a reference to Trinitarian baptism, which is probably a later insertion (<https://www.apostolicchristianfaith.com/post/2016/10/22/the-didache-can-we-trust-it> - Retrieved 3/15/22); if not, it indicates a gradual shift away from the original Jesus' name formula towards the end of the post-Apostolic Age.

In any case, the church leaders of this time were simply Christocentric

monotheists who did not think in the yet-undeveloped Trinitarian terms. Their doctrine of God was much more Biblical and much less polluted with Greek philosophy than the later doctrinal corruptions of Arianism and Trinitarianism – and corresponded most closely to the modern view of Oneness theology.

-The Age of the Greek Apologists:

In the Age of the Greek Apologists (c. 130-180 A.D.), we find a progressive shift away from the apostles' doctrine of Oneness and the substantially identical views held during the post-Apostolic Age.

The primary change was the doctrine of the Logos as a second divine person subordinate to the Father. As we discussed earlier and throughout our study, “Logos” is the Greek term that is translated “the Word” in John 1:1, meaning the mind, thought, plan, activity, utterance, or expression of God. It can refer to the unexpressed thought of God, or it can refer to the thought of God expressed, particularly as expressed in flesh through Jesus Christ. But in ancient Greek philosophy, it meant reason as the controlling principle in the universe.

Neo-Platonic philosophy, particularly that which was influenced by Philo of Alexandria (20 B.C.-40 A.D.), a Hellenistic Jewish philosopher, began to personify “the Word” and describe it as a secondary deity created by God or emanating from God in time.

Some of the Greek apologists in the church began to adopt this view and equate the Logos with the Son, bringing about a form of

Binitarianism, or semi-Trinitarianism – which subordinated the Son to the Father – but which eventually evolved over time (in the following Age we will discuss) to hold that the Logos was “God the Son,” but was equal and coeternal with God the Father (comprising what today is orthodox Trinitarianism).

These early apologists who had begun to deviate from the Modalistic views of the early church incorporated this belief regarding the Logos, in which they subordinated the Logos to the Father, making Jesus a created divine being of secondary rank.

Around 150 A.D., the apologists Justin Martyr and Tatian taught that the Father and the Word were two distinct persons. By 170-180 A.D., Theophilus and Athenagoras had begun to associate a vague, undefined form of threeness with God. Meanwhile, Modalists such as Bishop Melito of Sardis at this time still maintained a predominantly Oneness view of God.

During this period, Theophilus was the first to use the word “triad” to describe God. However, even he probably did not use it to refer to a Trinity of divine persons as we would know it today, but instead to a triad of God’s activities.

-Bernard, p. 267.

It was during this transitional age that we find the first definite modification of the baptismal formula and the first roots of Trinitarianism. The Apologists compromised the two cardinal tenets of the Biblical doctrine of Oneness theology:

1. They replaced God's absolute oneness with a plurality (first two persons and then later a triad of sorts).
2. They denied the absolute deity of Jesus Christ, making Him a subordinate deity.

So, we can understand that during this period, the Greek Apologists began to introduce several key foundational doctrinal deviations that would eventually lead to the development of full-blown Trinitarianism in the Age to follow. They introduced the Logos as a second divine person or god, the begetting of the Logos at a point in time before creation, the equating of the Logos with the Son, the introduction of a threefold baptismal formula, and the beginnings of a vague linking of "threeness" with God.

-The Old Catholic Age:

In the Old Catholic Age (c. 170-325 A.D.), Christendom shifted from the Biblical belief in one God toward a form of Trinitarianism. This process had already begun with the vague Binitarian and triadic formulations of the Greek Apologists in the mid to latter part of the 2nd century, and it culminated in the promulgation of orthodox Trinitarianism in the latter part of the 4th century.

As we've already shown earlier, the historical evidence indicates that Modalism (or Oneness) was still the dominant Christian theological view in the first part of this Old Catholic Age. In fact, since history is written by the victors (and the Catholic Church has a distinct history of destroying opposing documents), the existing evidence we have today likely reveals only a fraction of the total scope. Nevertheless,

what we do have does demonstrate that Modalism was still widespread during this period.

At the beginning of the Old Catholic Age, Irenaeus emphasized the threefold revelation of God; however, he did not speak of a Trinity of essence. He retained many important elements of earlier Oneness beliefs, particularly the following: God is one, Jesus is God, the Word is the mind and expression of the Father, the Son is the visible manifestation of the invisible Father, and the name of Jesus belongs to and reveals the Father. Irenaeus did not fully adopt the thinking of the Greek Apologists, but he was influenced by them, particularly in equating the Logos and the Son and in some sense distinguishing the Logos from the Father. He apparently held that the Logos was originally inherent in God and somehow became distinct for the purpose of God's self-revelation.

-David K. Bernard, "Oneness and Trinity: A.D. 100-300," Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press, 1991, p. 169.

Thus, Irenaeus acts as a transitional figure between original Oneness theology and later Trinitarianism, but yet in a different way from the Apologists. In many ways, he was still closer to a Oneness view.

More than any other theologian of this time, Tertullian (c. 150-225 A.D.) developed the terminology and concepts of the Trinity, yet all the while did so as a member of a schismatic group that denounced the mainstream church. Tertullian was the first person recorded by history to use the words "Trinity," "substance," and "person" in relation to God (Heick, 1:123-29). Excluding a reference in the Didache that was probably a later insertion, he was the first to cite Matthew

28:19 as the proper baptismal formula and the first to mention triple baptism (a triple dipping that was adopted by later Trinitarians).

He was the first to speak of three persons in one substance, though he did not believe in the eternality of the Trinity. Instead, his view was what some have called an economic conception of the Trinity, in which it exists only for the purpose of revelation – and following this, the distinctions between persons will cease (Bernard, p. 268). In other words, he believed that the Trinity was temporary.

Tertullian also equated the Logos (“the Word” in John 1) with the Son – the doctrine of the Greek apologists. He believed the Father brought the Son into existence for the creation of the world and the Logos was subordinate to the Father.

Thus, we can say that he clearly did not hold the later orthodox Trinitarian doctrines of coeternality and coequality of the “god-persons.” By his own admission, the majority of believers in his day rejected his doctrine on two grounds:

- Their Rule of Faith (early creed or statement of belief) prohibited polytheism
- His doctrine divided the unity of God

-Tertullian “Against Praxeas,” eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, in “The Ante-Nicene Fathers,” Rpt. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977, III, pp. 598-599.

Our knowledge of the early Modalist (or Oneness) believers Noetus and Praxeas comes from their strong opposition to Tertullian and his strong opposition to them.

It should also be noted that Tertullian became a follower of Montanus, who claimed to be the last prophet before the end of the world, and whom the mainstream church at the time deemed to be a heretic. Tertullian eventually began to praise celibacy and condemn marriage. In the end, he was disfellowshipped by the church at the time, as his teachings were viewed as deviant.

-Bernard, p. 270.

So, Tertullian had introduced the terminology of Trinitarianism and became its first great proponent in the West. Another early scholar, Origen (c. 184-253 A.D.), became the first great proponent of Trinitarian ideas in the East (Heick 1:112-113). He attempted to fuse Greek philosophy and Christianity into a system of higher knowledge that historians have often described as Christian Gnosticism (Bernard, p. 271). He accepted the newly developed Logos doctrine, which claimed that the Logos was a different person from the Father – but he added a unique feature not proposed until his time. He proposed that the Son or Logos was a distinct person begotten from all eternity. Origen retained a view of the subordination of the Son to the Father in deity, but moved a bit closer to the later Trinitarian doctrine of coequality (ibid.).

Origen held and taught many heretical beliefs due to his acceptance of Greek philosophy into his beliefs about doctrine. For instance, he denied the necessity of the redemptive work of Christ and believed in the ultimate salvation of the wicked, including Satan. Because of these beliefs, he also was eventually excommunicated from the church and many of his doctrines were later anathematized by church

councils in the 500's A.D.

Trinitarian theologian Louis Berkhof summarized what we just discussed, and explained how the confusing, evolving doctrines of the Greek Apologists gradually led to the doctrine of the Trinity, primarily through the later innovations of Tertullian and Origen, and how the Modalistic Monarchians rose up against this new doctrine...

"It may be said that [Tertullian] enlarged the doctrine of the Logos into a doctrine of the Trinity...

The early Church Fathers... had no clear conception of the Trinity. Some of them conceived of the Logos as impersonal reason, become personal at the time of creation, while others regarded Him as personal and co-eternal with the Father, sharing the divine essence, and yet ascribed to Him a certain subordination to the Father. The Holy Spirit occupied no important place in their discussions at all... Tertullian was the first to assert clearly the tripersonality of God, and to maintain the substantial unity of the three Persons. But even he did not reach a clear statement of the doctrine of the Trinity.

Meanwhile, Monarchianism came along with its emphasis on the unity of God and on the true deity of Christ, involving a denial of the Trinity in the proper sense of the word. Tertullian and Hippolytus combatted their views in the West, while Origen struck them a decisive blow in the East... But even Origen's construction of the doctrine of the Trinity was not altogether satisfactory... While he was the first to explain the relation of the Father to the Son by employing the idea of eternal generation, he defined this so as to involve the subordination of the

Second Person to the First in respect to essence.”

-Louis Berkhof, “The History of Christian Doctrines,” Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1937, pp. 65, 83-84.

Most of the later writers of the Old Catholic Age spoke more and more in Trinitarian terms. They typically subordinated the Son and Spirit to the Father, yet still did not have a clear doctrine on the Holy Spirit.

Novatian (c. 200-258 A.D.), another schismatic, contributed greatly to the evolution of Trinitarian thought, as he was the first to emphasize the Holy Spirit as a distinct third person. But he also taught a semi-Trinitarianism, advocating for a belief in the subordination of the Son to the Father, saying that the Son was a distinct person, but that He was not eternal – that He had a beginning. Cornelius, Bishop of Rome, later excommunicated Novatian for believing that a number of serious sins could not be forgiven if committed after conversion.

Only a few writers of this age (Dionysius of Rome and possibly Gregory Thaumaturgus) seemed to define Trinitarianism in a way compatible with later orthodoxy.

In summary, the Old Catholic Age produced the first definite Trinitarians, who clashed first with the Modalistic Monarchians, and then with the Arians. By the end of the 3rd century, semi-Trinitarianism had replaced Modalism (or Oneness) as the belief held by the majority of Christendom, but it would take most of the 4th century to develop into its modern form.

-To the Council of Nicea and Beyond:

During the early part of the 4th century, a great controversy about the Godhead came to a climax – the clash between the teachings of Arius and Athanasius. Arius wished to preserve the oneness of God and yet proclaim the independent personality of the Logos. Like Trinitarians, he equated the Logos with the Son and with Christ. He taught that Christ is a created being – a divine being but not of the same essence as the Father and not coequal with the Father. In other words, to him Christ was a demigod – a belief proclaimed today by Jehovah's Witnesses. In effect, Arius taught a new form of polytheism.

In opposition to Arius, Athanasius took a position that incorporated Trinitarian ideas. Therefore, while the earlier Tertullian had been the first to introduce many Trinitarian concepts and terms to Christendom, Athanasius is often considered the true father of modern Trinitarianism.

When the Arian-Athanasian controversy began to sweep across the Roman Empire, Emperor Constantine decided to intervene. Recently converted to mainstream Christianity, and having made it a legally acceptable religion, he felt the need to protect the unity of Christendom for the welfare of his empire. According to tradition, his conversion came as the result of a vision he saw just prior to a crucial battle. Supposedly, he saw a cross of light in the sky with a message saying, "In this sign, conquer." He went on to win the battle, becoming co-emperor in 312 A.D. and sole emperor in 324 A.D. When the great Arian-Athanasian controversy threatened to divide his newly won

empire and destroy his plan to use Christianity in consolidating and maintaining political power, he convened the first ecumenical council of the church, which took place in Nicea in 325 A.D.

-Bernard, pp. 272-273.

Let's recognize that Constantine was no model of Christianity. In 326 A.D., he killed his son, nephew, and wife. He purposely deferred baptism until shortly before death on the theory that he would thereby be cleansed of all the sins of his life.

-ibid., p. 273.

Historian Will Durant said of him...

“Christianity was to him a means, but not an end...While Christianity converted the world, the world converted Christianity and displayed the natural paganism of mankind.”

-Will Durant, “The Story of Civilization,” New York: Simon & Schuster, III, 1944, pp. 653-64.

The “Christianity” that Constantine endorsed was different from that practiced by Christ and the apostles. It is important to emphasize that much of the mainstream church had been corrupting itself through Gnostic and Greek philosophy long before Constantine. The emperor just accelerated this corruption from the original Christianity by his own desire to consolidate political power – but was fueled also by his hatred of the Jews. Constantine himself said...

“Let us then have nothing in common with the detestable Jewish crowd.”

-Eusebius, “Life of Constantine,” 3.18-19, in “The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers,” eds. Philip

Schaff and Henry Wace, Rpt. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976, 2nd ser. 1, pp. 524-525.

By establishing Christianity as the preferred religion of the Roman Empire (which later ultimately led to it becoming the mandatory official state religion), Constantine radically altered the church and accelerated its acceptance of pagan rituals and heretical doctrines. As church historian Walter Nigg said...

“As soon as Emperor Constantine opened the floodgates and the masses of the people poured into the Church out of sheer opportunism, the loftiness of the Christian ethos was done for.”

-Nigg, p. 102.

Constantine’s approach of merging religious practices produced a corrupted Christianity that meshed paganism with Biblical elements. When we consider the vast differences between the mainstream Christianity of today and the original Christianity of Jesus Christ and the Apostles, we can trace much of that change to Constantine and the religious system he introduced. In the words of Abram Herbert Lewis...

“The opening of the Fourth Century marks a new era in the process by which paganism poisoned Christianity. Constantine turned Christianity into a piece of political machinery.”

-Abram Herbert Lewis, “Paganism Surviving in Christianity,” New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1892, p. 203.

He then states...

“From the time of Constantine onward, the worship of the Roman Catholic Church, in its forms and ceremonies, has been more clearly

identified with the paganism of Ancient Rome, than with the religion of the New Testament. The customs of pagan religion were only baptized with Christian names.”

-ibid., p. 210.

E. Edwin Hall said the following...

“Soon after the so-called conversion of Constantine...the Church entered on its Apostasy from the primitive simplicity and purity which marked its earlier history. Pagans in vast multitudes pressed into the Christian Fold, bringing with them old practices and customs, and filling the places of Christian worship with the pageantry and ornaments which characterized the worship of the gods in heathen temples. These unconverted millions became only nominally Christian, impressing the doctrines, rites, and forms of pagan religion upon the Christian Church.”

-E. Edwin Hall, “Sabbath Outlook,” July, 1889, Qtd. in “Theological Quarterly,” St. Louis: Concordia, 1911, p. 87.

Focusing back to the Arian-Athanasian controversy that occurred as Constantine was coming to power, we already pointed out that the Council of Nicea was convened in 325 A.D. to solve the problems at hand. Constantine however, was not interested in any particular doctrinal outcome, as long as the participants reached an agreement. Once this occurred, Constantine threw his power behind the result. Walter Nigg tells us the following...

“Constantine, who treated religious questions solely from a political point of view, assured unanimity by banishing all the bishops who would not sign the new professions of faith. In this way unity was

achieved. It was altogether unheard of that a universal creed should be instituted solely on the authorship of the emperor...Not a bishop said a single word against this monstrous thing.”

-Nigg, pp. 126-127.

The resulting creed was a clear rejection of Arianism, but was still actually very Modalistic in doctrine – with the council even being led by such Modalist leaders as Marcellus of Ancyra. The modern concept of the Trinity was not yet fully stated in this council. However, it did begin the thought pattern that ultimately lead to the modern concept.

This original Nicene statement, while not yet including any overtly Trinitarian statements, does seem to imply a personal distinction between Father and Son and states that the Son is not mutable or changeable. This is a departure from the Biblical doctrine of the Son and supports modern Trinitarianism since it teaches an eternal Son.

The Nicene Creed then had a threefold significance:

- It is the first official church declaration not fully compatible with Modalism (or Oneness)
- It is a rejection of Arianism
- It is the first official declaration supporting an early form of Trinitarianism

The years that followed Nicea were a back-and-forth battle between the Arians and Athanasians. A later council in 335 A.D. actually reversed the decision of Nicea, now ruling in favor of Arianism, and Athanasius was sent into exile multiple times! The controversy became

very political, producing vicious infighting and much bloodshed and death.

It was not until 381 A.D. at the Council of Constantinople that the issue was resolved. This council, held after the death of Athanasius, ratified the Nicene statement. But it also added newly developed Trinitarian doctrine, involving the distinct personhood of the Holy Spirit. With this council, what would eventually become the modern doctrine of the Trinity had gained permanent victory in the majority. That council was the first to state unequivocally that Father, Son and Holy Spirit were three distinct persons of God, co-equal, co-eternal, and co-essential. A revised Nicene Creed came from this council. The present form of the Nicene Creed, which probably emerged around 500 A.D. (Heick, 1:163) is therefore even more strongly Trinitarian than the original Nicene Creed.

One other important creed also emerged – the Athanasian Creed, which unlike the name might suggest, did not come from Athanasius. It was probably influenced by the Trinitarian doctrine of Augustine (354-430 A.D.), because it developed during or after his time. This creed is the most comprehensive statement of Trinitarianism in ancient church history. However, only the western part of Christendom recognizes it.

So, the evolution of the Trinity can be well seen in light of the various creeds produced by these church councils. As each of the creeds became wordier and more convoluted, the simple, pure faith of the Apostolic church became lost in a haze. Even more interesting is the fact that as the creeds became more specific (and less Scriptural),

the adherence to them became stricter, and the penalty for disbelief harsher, leading to the atrocities of the Medieval church.

In stark contrast, is the simple oneness of the Hebrew God. Jesus was a Jew from the tribe of Judah. He claimed to be sent to the “lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 15:24). His Apostles and first believers were mainly Jews. His God was the Jewish God. He called himself the Son of God and acknowledged His role as the Christ (Matthew 16:15-17) and the Messiah (John 4:25-26). His message was one of love, righteousness, and salvation, and He despised the religious dogma of tradition. What a contrast from the proceedings of the Council of Nicea and the murders that followed! He gave the good news of His coming kingdom to the poor and meek: the lowly of this world. He did not require dogmatic creeds that had to be believed to the word, but rather said, “Follow me” (Matthew 9:9).

So then, does the evidence we examined in these last two sections demonstrate positive proof that the doctrine of the Trinity owes its origins to paganism, philosophy, and the traditions of men? The evidence of history leaves little doubt. Through our explorations of pagan and Christian history, we can see that the concept of the Trinity demonstrable finds its roots in pagan theology and Greek philosophy, and was a progressive development that emerged and evolved over centuries through church councils, politics, and incredible violence. It is a stranger to the Jewish Jesus and the Hebrew people from which He sprang, as well as the Apostles and New Testament church.

In conclusion, from the witness of history, we see that the doctrine of the Trinity is post-New Testament and post-Apostolic in origin. Our clear understanding of Christian history reveals that it is unquestionably the result of man, and not the New Testament. History attests to the early prevalence of Modalism, or Oneness theology as being standard throughout the church prior to the rise of errors such as Arianism and Trinitarianism. Our brief jog through the high points of early Christian doctrinal history of course left out much more evidence that can be demonstrated, showing the early dominance of Modalism and the later progressive development of the Trinity – however, we trust that by hitting a number of the highlights, you get the main idea.

We can easily trace the historical origin and development of Trinitarianism, and it does not lead us back to Jesus, the Apostles, or the New Testament writings. Rather, history demonstrates its origin to be unmistakably post-Apostolic (mainly from the 3rd-5th centuries A.D.) and its development to be accelerated by the steady falling away from true Biblical doctrine as the incorporation of Greek and pagan philosophy was accepted and the Roman church began to consolidate power. Modalism (Oneness) was the dominant Christian theological view of the early several centuries, and Trinitarianism did not achieve popular supremacy until the 300's A.D. (the 4th century) at the very earliest.

The first official recognition of some form of Trinitarian doctrine came at the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D., but even this was incomplete. Full establishment of the doctrine did not come until the Council of Constantinople in 381 A.D. In short, Trinitarianism did not

achieve its present form until the end of the 4th century, and its definitive creeds did not take final form until the 5th century.

Trinitarian church scholar Dr. Jaroslav Pelikan summarizes our conclusions...

“One of the most widely accepted conclusions of the 19th century history of dogma was the thesis that the dogma of the Trinity was not an explicit doctrine of the New Testament, still less of the Old Testament, but had evolved from New Testament times to the 4th century.”

-Pelikan, p. 134.

So, since this is a matter of historical fact – rather than fringe interpretation or speculation – we should be assured in the sound teachings of the Oneness of God found throughout the Scriptures. This precious truth was revealed to the ancient Hebrews in the revelation of Yahweh as one God. And the New Testament reveals the progressive revelation of that same one God taking on a body of flesh as the Son of God and Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Although by the end of the 4th century, Trinitarianism was solidly established and triumphant, the existence of the Bible and the illumination of the Holy Spirit ensured that the Biblical message of Oneness would not die completely. Throughout subsequent centuries, Oneness concepts and baptism in the name of Jesus would continue to surface. In the 20th century, the great outpouring of the Holy Spirit has ushered in a renewed understanding of the Biblical message of the absolute oneness of God and the absolute deity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

For more extensive documentation, discussion, and analysis, see:

-David K. Bernard, "The Oneness of God," Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press, 2000.

-David K. Bernard, "Oneness and Trinity: A.D. 100-300," Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press, 1991.

-David K. Bernard, "The Trinitarian Controversy in the Fourth Century," Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press, 1993.

Trinitarian Contradictions To Biblical Teaching

In this section, we will quickly point out some of the basic points in which Trinitarianism is antithetical to Biblical teaching. It also contains a number of internal contradictions. The following is a non-exhaustive list of some of the very basic and obvious Trinitarian contradictions to Biblical teaching.

1. Did Jesus Christ have two fathers? The Father is the Father of the Son (1 John 1:3), yet the child born of Mary was conceived by the Holy Ghost (Matthew 1:18, 20; Luke 1:35). Which one is the true Father? Some Trinitarians say that the Holy Ghost was merely the Father's "agent" in conception – a process they actually compare to artificial insemination!

-Carl Brumback, "God in Three Persons," Cleveland, TN: Pathway Press, 1959, p. 79.

2. How many Spirits are there? God the Father is a Spirit (John 4:24), the Lord Jesus is a Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:17), and the Holy Spirit is a Spirit by definition. Yet Scripture clearly tell us that there is only one Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13, Ephesians 4:4).
3. If the Father and Son are co-equal persons, why did Jesus pray to the Father? (Matthew 11:25). Can God pray to God?
4. Similarly, if they are co-equal, how can the Son "not have any power except what the Father gives Him?" (as we are told in John 5:19, 30; 6:38).

5. Similarly, what about other verses of Scripture indicating the “inequality” of the Son and the Father? (John 8:42; 14:28; 1 Corinthians 11:3).
6. Did “God the Son” die? The Bible says the Son died (Romans 5:10). If so, can God die? Can part of God die?
7. How can there be an eternal Son when the Bible speaks of the begotten Son, clearly indicating that the Son had a beginning? (John 3:16; Hebrews 1:5-6).
8. If the Son is eternal and existed at creation, who was His mother at that time? Scripture teaches us the Son was made of a woman (Galatians 4:4).
9. Did “God the Son” surrender His omnipresence while on earth? If so, how could He still be God?
10. If the Son is eternal in existence and immutable (unchangeable), how can the reign of the Son have an ending? (we are told it will in 1 Corinthians 15:24-28).
11. If in answer to questions 3 through 11, we say that only the human Son of God was limited in knowledge, was limited in power, and died, then how can we speak of “God the Son”? Are there two Sons?

12. Whom do we worship and to whom do we pray? Jesus said to worship the Father (John 4:21-24), yet Stephen prayed to Jesus (Acts 7:59-60).
13. Can there be more than three persons in the Godhead? Certainly, the Old Testament does not teach three, but emphasizes oneness. If the New Testament adds to the Old Testament message and teaches three persons, then what is to prevent subsequent revelations of additional persons? If we apply Trinitarian logic to interpret some verses of Scripture, we could teach a fourth person (Isaiah 48:16; Colossians 1:3; 2:2; 1 Thessalonians 3:11; James 1:27). Likewise, we could interpret some verses of Scripture to mean six more persons (Revelation 3:1; 5:6).
14. Are there three spirits in a Christian's heart? The Father, Jesus and the Spirit all dwell within a Christian (according to John 14:17, 23; Romans 8:9, and Ephesians 3:14-17). Yet we are told there is only one Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13); Ephesians 4:4).
15. There is only one throne in heaven (Revelation 4:2). Who sits upon it? We know Jesus does (Revelation 1:8, 18; 4:8). Where do the Father and the Holy Spirit sit?
16. If Jesus is on the throne, how can He sit on the right hand of God? (Mark 16:19). Does He sit or stand on the right hand of God? (Acts 7:55). Or is He in the Father's bosom? (John 1:18).

17. Is Jesus in the Godhead (as Trinitarians believe), or is the Godhead in Jesus (as we are told in Colossians 2:9)?
18. Given Matthew 28:19 (baptizing in the titles Father/Son/Holy Spirit), why did the Apostles consistently baptize both Jews and Gentiles using only the name of Jesus, even to the extent of rebaptism? (Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5; 22:16; 1 Corinthians 1:13).
19. Who raised Jesus from the dead? Did the Father (Ephesians 1:20), or Jesus (John 2:19-21), or the Spirit (Romans 8:11)?
20. If Son and Holy Ghost are co-equal persons in the Godhead, why is blasphemy of the Holy Ghost unforgivable but blasphemy of the Son is not? (Luke 12:10).
21. If the Holy Ghost is a co-equal member of the Trinity, why does the Bible always speak of Him being sent from the Father or from Jesus? (John 14:26; 15:26).
22. Did the Trinity make the Old and New Covenants? We know the Lord (Yahweh) did (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:7-13). If Yahweh is a Trinity, then Father, Son, and Spirit all had to die to make the New Covenant effective (Hebrews 9:16-17).
23. If the Spirit proceeds from the Father, is the Spirit also a son of the Father? If not, why not?
24. If the Spirit proceeds from the Son, is the Spirit the grandson of the Father? If not, why not?

This is just a short list of questions that Trinitarianism cannot answer without either contradicting Trinitarianism itself, or contradicting Scripture. In the next section, we will compare Trinitarian and Oneness theology, and see how they contrast on each point.

Trinitarianism Compared To Oneness Doctrine

In order to understand clearly how Trinitarianism differs from the Bible's teaching on the Godhead, we have prepared a list contrasting the two. Let's begin...

1. Trinitarianism: There are three persons in one God. That is, there are three essential distinctions in God's nature. God is the Holy Trinity.

Oneness: There is one God with no essential divisions in His nature. He is not a plurality of persons, but He does have a plurality of manifestations, roles, titles, attributes, or relationships to humanity. Furthermore, these are not limited to three.

2. Trinitarianism: Father, Son and Holy Ghost (or Spirit) are the three persons in the Godhead. They are distinct persons, and they are coequal, coeternal, and coessential. However, God the Father is the head of the Trinity in some sense, and the Son and Spirit proceed from Him in some sense.

Oneness: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost (or Spirit) are different designations for the one God. God is the Father. God is the Holy Spirit. The Son is God manifest in flesh. The term "Son" always refers to the Incarnation and never to deity apart from humanity.

3. Trinitarianism: Jesus Christ is the incarnation of “God the Son.” Jesus is not the Father or the Holy Spirit.

Oneness: Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He is the incarnation of the fullness of God. In other words, in His deity, Jesus is the manifestation of all that we consider God (the Godhead).

4. Trinitarianism: The Son is eternal. “God the Son” has existed from all eternity. The Son is eternally begotten by the Father.

Oneness: The Son is begotten, not eternal. The Son of God existed from all eternity only as a plan in the mind of God. The Son of God came into actual (substantial) existence at the Incarnation, at which time the Son was conceived (begotten) by the Spirit of God.

5. Trinitarianism: “The Word” of John 1 (the Logos) is the second person in the Godhead, namely, God the Son.

Oneness: “The Word” of John 1 (the Logos) is not a distinct person, but is the mind, thought, plan, activity, or expression of God. The Word was expressed in flesh as the Son of God.

6. Trinitarianism: Jesus is the human name given to “God the Son,” the eternal second person in the Godhead, as manifested in flesh.

Oneness: Jesus (meaning Jehovah/Yahweh-savior) is the revealed name of God in the New Testament. Jesus is the name

of the one being that is God (the Godhead), including all manifestations/roles/relationships (Father, Son, Holy Ghost, et al.).

7. Trinitarianism: Water baptism is correctly administered by saying, “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost (or Spirit).”

Oneness: Water baptism is correctly administered by saying, “in the name of Jesus.” The name of Jesus is usually accompanied with the titles Lord, Christ, or both.

8. Trinitarianism: We will see the Trinity or triune God in heaven. Many Trinitarians say we will see three bodies, which is outright tritheism. Others leave open the possibility that we will see only one Spirit being with one body. Most Trinitarians do not know what they believe about this, and some frankly admit they don't know.

-Bernard Ramm, “Protestant Biblical Interpretation,” 3rd ed., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1965, p. 171.

Oneness: We will see Jesus Christ in heaven. He is the One on the throne and the only God we will ever see.

9. Trinitarianism: The Godhead is a mystery. We must accept by faith the mystery of the Trinity despite its apparent contradictions.

Oneness: God's oneness is no mystery to the church. We cannot understand everything there is to know about God (especially while in our fallen humanity), but the Bible clearly teaches that God is one in number and that Jesus Christ is the one God manifested in flesh.

Conclusion

We affirm that the Biblical viewpoint of God is Oneness and not Trinitarianism. Trinitarianism does not add any positive benefit to the Christian message, and in fact doesn't allow for one to recognize Jesus as being fully God. In other words, because Trinitarians believe Jesus is "only" the second person of the Trinity, they don't believe that He is as fully God as Oneness believers do. When one does a cursory examination of all false Christian cult beliefs, it can be concluded that one common denominator is all attempt to undercut the full divinity of Jesus Christ. The doctrine of the Trinity, though adherents would vehemently deny it, also undercuts Jesus' full divinity by the belief that He is only the second person and not the fullness of the Godhead manifest in flesh.

Without the man-made doctrine of the Trinity, we can still affirm the deity of Jesus, the humanity of Jesus, the virgin birth, the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, the Atonement, justification by faith, the sole authority of Scripture, and any other doctrine that is essential to true Christianity. In fact, all of these doctrines and beliefs are enhanced by the message that Jesus is the one God manifested in flesh.

The intent of the last few sections has been to demonstrate that Trinitarianism is not a Biblical doctrine and that it contradicts the Bible in many ways. The Scriptures do not teach a Trinity of persons. The doctrine of the Trinity uses terminology and concepts not used in Scripture. It teaches and emphasizes plurality in the Godhead, while Scripture emphasizes the oneness of God. It detracts from the

fullness of Jesus Christ's deity. It contradicts not only itself, but also many specific verses in Scripture. It is not logical. No one can understand or explain it rationally, including those who advocate for it. It can be shown historically to have arisen centuries following the New Testament period. It can be shown historically to be a product of blending paganism, Gnosticism, and Greek philosophy with Christianity. It can be shown historically to be a result of human church councils rather than inspired Scripture. In short, Trinitarianism is a doctrine that does not belong to or originate from true Christianity or the Bible.

Let's review the essence of the doctrine of God taught by the Bible, which we refer to as Oneness....

- First, there is one indivisible God without distinction of persons.
- Second, Jesus Christ is the fullness of the Godhead incarnate. He is the God of the Old Testament wrapped in flesh. All of God is in Jesus. The only God we will ever see in heaven is Jesus Christ. Father, Son and Holy Ghost are simply roles or relationships taken on by God in order to accomplish what needed to be done for mankind.

Why though, is understanding this so important?

- First, it is imperative that we understand God in the way He reveals Himself to us through the written Word.

- Second, we must remember the emphasis Jesus placed on our understanding of who He is. “If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:24). It is apparently mandatory that you must believe that there is one God and that Jesus is the fleshly manifestation of that one God.
- Third, the correct understanding of the Godhead through Scripture establishes the formula for water baptism in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38).
- And fourth, the correct understanding of God teaches us how important the baptism of the Holy Spirit really is. Since there is only one Spirit of God, and since the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ, we only fully receive Christ into our lives when we are filled/baptized with the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9).

Since the Bible so plainly teaches the oneness of God and the full deity of Jesus Christ, why is it obscure to many people, even to those in modern Christendom? For so many years, corrupt doctrine has been mainstreamed in many denominational Christian churches. Understanding of truth does not come merely through intellectual study, and it certainly doesn't come through politics or church councils. It comes through prayerful seeking, diligent study, and an earnest desire for truth. When Peter made his great confession of the deity of Jesus, Jesus responded by saying, “Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 16:16-17). Therefore, if we want to understand the true identity of Jesus, we must put away human doctrines, traditions, philosophies, and theories. Instead we must engage the pure Word of God, asking

God to give us true revelation and guide us into all truth (John 14:26; 16:13).

It is not enough to rely on church dogmas, for church dogmas are only valid if they are taught in Scripture. Instead, we must go back to the Bible itself, carefully study it, and ask God to illuminate it to our understanding by His Spirit.

“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.” –Colossians 2:8-10

Adherence to the belief in the oneness of God brings many blessings. It places emphasis where it should be - on the importance and precision of Biblical terminology, thought, and themes. It establishes Christianity as the true heir of Mosaic Judaism and as a truly monotheistic belief. It reminds us that God our Father and Creator loved us so much that He robed Himself in flesh to come as our Redeemer. It reminds us that we can receive this same Creator and Redeemer into our hearts through His own Spirit.

Oneness teaching magnifies Jesus Christ, exalts His name, recognizes who He really is, and acknowledges His full deity. Exalting Jesus and His name in preaching and in worship brings a mighty move of His power in blessings, encouragement, deliverance, prayer, miracles, healings, and salvation. Wonderful things happen when someone preaches or teaches a message of the deity of Jesus, the name of

Jesus, and the oneness of God, but rarely does one get inspired over a message on the Trinity.

A strong belief in the oneness of God and the absolute deity of Jesus Christ is a crucial element in restoring Biblical truth and apostolic power to the modern church that history shows has so significantly deviated from the original Christianity.

The Gospel Plan Of Salvation

Introduction

We will now begin our journey into another commonly misunderstood aspect of the New Testament, which we have summarized as the gospel plan of salvation. In addition to recognizing and understanding the identity of God, understanding the gospel plan of salvation is also equally critical for effectively walking with God. Having the proper understanding of this concept should lead the individual to the obedience of it! We understand that believing in something is not the same as obeying it. The ultimate consequence of believing in something is taking action in obedience to it. If one sits in a broken chair and comes to believe it will not sustain his weight, that belief will motivate him to perform the action of getting up in order to save himself from injury. When an individual understands and believes the gospel plan of salvation, the logical next step is for him to obey it in order to save himself from eternal separation from God.

Cerebrally believing in something is not enough. Action is essential! It was not enough for the man with the withered hand (Matthew 12:13) to simply believe Jesus could heal him. Jesus required him to act on that faith by obediently stretching forth his hand that he might be healed. In fact, your faith is demonstrated and proven by your obedience, or your actions. If you truly believe something can save you, you will do it. In the same way, we should expect our salvation to not only require our faith, but also our obedience. This is reflected in the Biblical Greek concept of the word “believe,” which is somewhat different from our modern English understanding, and has caused some

confusion among modern Christians. In Greek, “believe” didn’t just mean a mental acceptance, but was an action verb that implied completely giving oneself over to something to the point where you are willing to die for it. Something you believed in was something you committed your life towards.

There is rampant confusion in the denominational world over the subject of salvation. We will do our best to avoid the pitfalls of church tradition and labor to look into the Word of God without the shackles of preconceived notions or biases. In order to have a fuller understanding of truth, we must be willing to take what the Bible says on its own terms, rather than looking through the lenses of denominational Christianity!

In the early days of Christianity, being on guard against false teachers, false prophets, and false doctrine was of paramount importance. We read in Revelation chapter 2 of the letter to the Ephesian church and see how the Lord commended them for their diligence in doing exactly that. The apostles understood that truth has no versions or denominations. During the time of the early church, the truth of Christianity was like a spark that ignited the then known world, ultimately, turning the pagan world upside down with truth (Acts 17:6). The spiritually dead world was turned ablaze as the gospel spread across the globe.

In that day, conversion to Christianity was a living, powerful, life changing experience in which a convert was willing to die for. The winds of persecution beat against the early church almost

continuously, but could not break it. If anything, these winds fed this fire and increased its movement and progression.

We understand from reading the New Testament that false doctrine was in some form, present even from the earliest of times. However, at that time, Christianity in its true form was still easily recognizable and mainstream.

But as time passed, what the Enemy could not accomplish through persecution, he ultimately accomplished through the infiltration of false doctrine from within, as in the centuries that followed, the church became married to the world, mixing paganism with elements of Christianity. The mainstream church of that time became a harlot rather than a pure virgin bride, as it became politically expedient to “become a Christian”. The merging of the government and the church promoted a “conversion” without a true conversion experience. The assimilation of paganism into Christianity rendered it Christianity in name only, and would have been unrecognizable to the early church and apostles. What the early persecutions kept authentic now had become watered down, fashionable, and didn’t require actual repentance. It became a dead, ritualistic church system instead of a living experience through the Spirit.

With no true regeneration experience taking place, it is no wonder that the “church” deescalated into a political system embracing false doctrine and going after temporal power. These abuses peaked in the Medieval church, which led to the Reformation – the movement that sought to reform the church back to the original pattern of the New Testament. The Reformation was successful in condemning many

of the abuses of the Medieval church, but unfortunately retained much of the tradition and false doctrine the false church had wrongly embraced over the years.

In present day “Christianity,” this same problem persists. The same false doctrines that were ignored by the Reformers are still being embraced by today’s denominational world. With this brief backdrop of church history in view, we recognize that it is imperative to enter into the Word of God prayerfully and study carefully in order to rightly understand the inerrant, infallible words of Scripture.

We encourage the readers to try to allow themselves to be free from the shackles of their own presuppositions regarding these subjects. We must study first, and then form an opinion! But even after we’ve studied, we must remain flexible to allow for the possibility that there may be information that we hadn’t before considered. Remain open-minded for the Spirit to lead you into deeper revelation, and always use reason and logic. And finally, let the evidence speak for itself!

“contempt prior to examination is an intellectual vice...”

-William Paley, qtd. in Charles Murray Nairne, “Paley’s Evidences of Christianity,” New York: Robert Carter and Bros., 1879, p. 445.

“He that answereth a matter before he heareth it,
it is folly and shame unto him.” -Proverbs 18:13

In order to gain deeper understandings, we will of necessity have to shed our biases and preconceived notions regarding these subjects as we enter into study. Only the Word of God – and not the religious traditions of men – can be our sole standard for truth!

Grace

One of the most misunderstood concepts involving the subject of salvation is grace. Grace can be defined as unmerited favor. In relation to God, it means that although we were unworthy of His love, mercy and providence because of our sin, He still determined to come to our rescue and make salvation possible through His death on the cross. Without God determining to come in the flesh in order to act as our kinsman Redeemer, salvation would not be possible. However, because of His death on the cross and subsequent resurrection, we are able to partake in the gospel plan of salvation!

“Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:” –Romans 3:24

God’s grace made every aspect of salvation and knowing Him possible. Without God’s grace, you would not be able to respond to the salvation that He made available. But thanks to the grace of God, we are able to respond by obedience to the gospel plan of salvation, which was only made possible through the death of Jesus Christ!

You may think of grace in the following way:

- Justice is getting what you do deserve!
- Mercy is not getting what you do deserve!
- Grace is getting what you don’t deserve!

Let’s understand deeper why the grace of God was necessary for our salvation. We have mentioned the term justice. Justice is an attribute

of God according to numerous Scriptures. For brevity, we will list just two.

“The Rock! His work is perfect, For all His ways are just; A God of faithfulness and without injustice, Righteous and upright is He.”
-Deuteronomy 32:4 (NASB)

“Surely, God will not act wickedly, And the Almighty will not pervert justice.” –Job 34:12

So, when understanding why the death of Jesus as a suitable sacrifice for our sins was necessary, it is imperative to recognize that God is a God of justice.

It is also necessary to understand that man, as a consequence of the fall of Adam and Eve in Genesis, is tainted with sin. Since the fall of man in Genesis, sin is now part of the human experience.

“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;”
-Romans 3:23

We recognize that part of what makes God, God, is the attribute of perfect justice. We must be thankful that God is not unjust or partial! But because He is righteous and just, yet we are sinful, there exists a problem.

In order to have a true love relationship with man - which is the ultimate desire of God - He had to present us with the freedom to either choose Him or reject Him. Because He gave us this free will, He

had to allow the possibility of not choosing right. When we don't choose what is right, it is called sin (Greek, "hamartia," Strong's #G266). The word sin actually means, "to miss the mark."

-<https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/hamartia.html> (Retrieved 2/21/18)

The "mark," was always relationship. But sin forms a chasm between God and man, preventing relationship. The chasm caused by sin will ultimately lead to our death and separation from God if not dealt with. Being apart from God is death, as nothing that God created can live without Him sustaining it. The fair and equitable judgment upon sin is death, according to the apostle Paul's letter to the Romans...

"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." –Romans 6:23

So, because God is just, and we are sinful, He is bound by His own justice to pronounce the fair and equitable judgment of natural and spiritual death upon us. God must maintain His absolute justice by judging all sin. A God that is unjust is no God at all! God's ultimate desire is to have a love relationship with His creation, but yet the creation was corrupted by sin. But God had a plan!

The plan that He devised in order to deal with this dilemma, the Bible presents as the gospel plan of salvation. It is a plan by which He can redeem fallen man back to Himself, ultimately separating for Himself a bride, which we call the church! Scripture continually uses the idiom of marriage to describe the desired relationship between Christ and the church. The details of this gospel plan will be discussed at length further ahead in the study.

Note: For more information on the subject of the marriage of Christ and the church, please refer to the companion study entitled, “[The Romance Of Redemption: The Marriage Of Jesus Christ And The Church](#)”.

But getting back to the topic of justice, the next obvious question you may ask then becomes, “If God must punish all sin to maintain His absolute justice, then how can He forgive sinners?” In order to answer that question, we need to become familiar with the Biblical term propitiation.

Propitiation involves appeasement for the purpose of reconciliation. In other words, propitiation is an atoning sacrifice. Atonement is a reparation for a wrong or injury. In this case, sin.

“Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood (speaking of Jesus), to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”

–Romans 3:25-26

Paul, the writer of Romans, is saying here that Christ’s sacrificial death is the means by which God’s just wrath is turned away from sinners. So, the answer is that Jesus’ sacrificial death satisfied God’s wrath and displays His justice in justifying sinners who have faith in Jesus. When He died on the cross, Jesus being the perfect sinless

sacrifice, bore the penalty of sin for all who will trust in Him. Therefore, if you trust in Him, God can justly forgive your sins.

“...having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.” -Colossians 2:13b-14

In mercy, God always provided the way to satisfy His wrath and be reconciled to Him. In the Garden of Eden, He slaughtered an animal, likely a lamb (prophetic of Christ's death as the spotless Lamb of God) and provided the skin to clothe Adam and Eve. He told Noah to build the ark to preserve he and his family from the Flood (in order to preserve humanity from the sin prior to the Flood so that the Messiah would one day come). He provided the ram (again, prophetic of Christ down to the very location), so that Abraham did not have to sacrifice Isaac (from whom the Messiah would eventually come). He gave detailed instructions to Moses about the sacrificial system (which was a picture of the atoning death of Christ). And, finally and supremely, by coming Himself in the flesh as the Son to die in our place on the cross, God satisfied His own wrath against our sin. Jesus Christ paid the debt that we owed, so that God can show His grace and love to all that trust in Christ.

We may wonder why the New Testament places such an emphasis on Christ's blood. Why doesn't it just refer to His death, which is clearly what His blood symbolizes? Why does Paul say that God displayed Christ as “a propitiation in His blood”? The answer is that He did so in order to connect what Christ did with the Old Testament sacrificial system. In other words, Jesus Christ acting as the atoning Lamb on

the cross was the ultimate fulfillment to the Old Testament sacrificial system that God instituted to act as a shadow of what was to come. But why did God require blood sacrifices in the Old Testament? The Lord explains this to Moses in the following passage...

“For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.”

-Leviticus 17:11

Back in Genesis, God told Adam and Eve that the punishment for their sins was death. This referred both to physical death and to spiritual death, both due to separation from God because of sin. When God killed an animal, perhaps a lamb, and clothed them with its skin, He was indicating that the way of reconciliation with Him was through shedding the blood of an acceptable substitute.

In the Old Testament sacrificial system, God provided a temporary way for sinners to have the judgment for their sins “pushed back” so that they could be reconciled to Him. He required that they kill a male firstborn lamb or goat without blemish and use its blood as the propitiation or atoning sacrifice for their sins. It pictured the substitutionary death of the innocent victim in place of the sinner. Though it was flawed and temporal, it pointed ahead to Jesus, the Lamb of God, the ultimate and all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins. Thus Jesus, just before going to the cross, as He celebrated the Passover with His disciples, took the cup of wine and said (1 Cor. 11:25), “This cup is the New Covenant in My blood.” So, Paul’s point when he says that God publicly displayed Christ “as a propitiation in

His blood,” is that Jesus’ sacrificial death satisfied God’s just wrath against sin.

On the cross, God’s justice was satisfied so that His mercy could flow to every sinner who trusts in Jesus. Remember from our study of the nature of God, that Jesus was both fully man and fully God. Because He was fully human, His death may be applied to the sins of humans. Because He is the eternal Son of God, His death has infinite merit, as He is the spotless and perfect sacrifice!

So, with this in mind, we should recognize that it is by God’s grace (or unmerited favor) that we are able to receive the salvation He has provided through His sacrificial death on the cross. Scripture makes it clear that the availability of this salvation to us is a gift from God – we do not merit, deserve, or earn it – it is free.

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:
Not of works, lest any man should boast.”
-Ephesians 2:8-9

This incredible free gift of salvation is prophesied of in the Old Testament, and offered to us in the New...

“Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” -Isaiah 55:1 (ESV)

“And the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’ And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.” -Revelation 22:17 (NKJV)

Through Christ’s death, not only was sinful man redeemed, but the water of life embodied in Christ, flowed out to us through the soon-after outpouring of the Spirit. On the cross, Christ’s side was pierced, and immediately there flowed out two substances – “blood” and “water” – “blood” representing redemption and “water” representing the impartation of abundant life through the Spirit, which He would later pour out on Pentecost (John 19:34). His death was not only a redeeming death, but also a life-releasing death. Through Christ’s death, this divine flow was released. Christ was the reality of the prophetic rock, smitten for us (Exo. 17:6), that the living water might flow out to become our spiritual drink (1 Cor. 10:4).

We could not save ourselves by good works or adherence to law. But by His atoning death, burial, and resurrection, Jesus Christ makes the gift of salvation available. In the next section, we will discuss the concept of faith, which is the next thing we need to understand, as faith is the means by which we appropriate God’s grace. By faith, we yield to God, obey His Word, and allow Him to perform His saving work in us. We will find out that faith then, involves both belief in the gospel of Christ as the means of salvation, and obedience to that gospel.

Faith

As we learned in the previous section, grace brings salvation as a free gift. We also learned that salvation was something God, through His grace alone – as the sinless sacrifice for sin – could provide. However, does man have a role in his own salvation? Or, did God do everything that needed to be done, thus requiring no response from man? Is everyone automatically saved because of the sacrificial death of Christ? As we transition from the subject of grace to the subject of faith, let's examine some of these common questions...

- If the doctrine of grace teaches that God does all the work in man's salvation, are all men automatically saved? This cannot be so, because many will receive eternal damnation at the last judgment (Rev. 20:11-15).
- If the doctrine of grace teaches that man has no role in receiving salvation, does God then arbitrarily choose certain ones to be saved regardless of their own attitudes and response? This cannot be true either, because God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34).

The doctrine of faith helps us understand the true answers to the above questions. Faith is the means by which man accepts and receives God's saving grace (Rom. 3:21-31, Eph. 2:8). Man cannot "help" God in providing salvation, nor can he do anything to "add to" what God has already done. But man does have the responsibility to accept or reject the salvation that God has made available. Man's response to God in accepting His work of salvation is accomplished

through the vehicle of faith. In other words, faith is the channel through which God's grace comes to man.

As we continue with the subject of faith, we need to familiarize ourselves with the term, justification. To be justified means to be counted or declared righteous by God. The Bible clearly teaches justification by faith (Hab. 2:4, Rom. 1:17, Gal. 3:11, Heb. 10:38). The passage in Habakkuk tells us that "the just shall live by faith." Paul preached this doctrine to the church...

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

-Romans 5:1-2

He also discusses justification through faith in the finished work of Christ, and not through the law...

"Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man (Christ) is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins:

And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."

-Acts 13:38-39

The bottom line is that no one can be justified (or made righteous) by observing the law of Moses or by doing "good works." Instead, the only way to salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ and His sacrifice

for us. Having established this, we must next determine what true faith in Christ is, and how to have or exercise it.

As we move into this deeper layer of understanding, it is important to recognize that even the ability to possess faith comes from God's grace. Due to our sinful natures, none of us could ever seek God on our own in the absence of His drawing power (John 3:27, 6:44, Rom. 3:10-12). But God gives every man the ability to seek and respond to Him. Everyone receives an initial measure of faith from God (Rom. 12:3). We also can find faith by hearing the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). In the creation of the universe itself, God left a clear witness of His reality so that everyone would have a reason to believe in Him, and have no excuse for failure to do so (Rom. 1:19-20).

So, we find that God gives potential faith to everyone, but He leaves it up to each individual whether or not to accept and apply faith to his life. We are responsible for letting God develop faith in us and for using the faith he has placed in our hearts.

We have already defined faith as man's positive response to God and the means by which he can accept God's saving grace. It is the means by which we yield to God, obey His Word, and allow Him to perform His saving work in us. This accurately states the function of faith, but now we will try to define more precisely what faith actually is.

Webster's Dictionary defines belief as "a state or habit of mind in which trust or confidence is placed in some person or thing." It defines faith as "allegiance to duty or a person...belief and trust in

and loyalty to God...something that is believed especially with strong conviction.”

-“Webster’s p. 816.

The well-known Bible commentator Charles Erdman confirms that rather than just a simple mental belief, Biblical faith embraces a personal relationship to Christ reflected in a person’s trust, obedience, and holy conduct...

“If faith denotes mere assent to dogmas, or the repetition of a creed, then to accept one as righteous, in view of his faith, would be absurd and unjust; but faith describes a personal relationship to Christ. For a believer, it means a trust in Christ, obedience to Christ, love for Christ, and such trust and obedience, and love inevitably result in purity and holiness and a life of unselfish service.”

-Charles Erdman, “The Epistle of Paul to the Romans,” Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966, p. 77.

Protestant theologian Donald Bloesch presents a definition of faith as...

“a radical commitment of the whole man to the living Christ, a commitment that entails knowledge, trust, and obedience.”

-Donald Bloesch, “Essentials of Evangelical Theology,” San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978, I, p. 207.

In other words, saving faith means much more than just mental knowledge or agreement. In fact, we can identify three key components of saving faith:

- Knowledge

- Assent
- Appropriation

-William Evans, "The Great Doctrines of the Bible," Chicago: Moody Press, 1974, p. 145.

Let's briefly discuss each...

Knowledge: To have faith in something, a person must first have a certain degree of knowledge or mental understanding. He must know what he professes to believe. Saving faith does not require us to understand everything about God or life, but it does require us to realize our need of salvation and know that Jesus Christ is our only Savior.

Assent: To have faith, there also must be assent, or mental acceptance. Knowledge is not enough, for a person can understand a certain proposition and yet disbelieve it. In addition to understanding, there must be an acknowledgement that the profession is correct.

Appropriation: Finally, there must be an appropriation of what is believed. In other words, there must be a practical application of truth. The only way we can believe another person is by accepting and following his word. Saving faith in Jesus Christ, then, involves more than mentally acknowledging Him as the Savior. We must appropriate this truth and make it the guiding principle of our lives. We do this by obeying the gospel of Jesus, by identifying with Him, by totally committing ourselves to Him, and by establishing a relationship of total trust in, adherence to, and reliance upon Him.

A study of the Greek words *pistis* (Strong's #G4102) and *pisteuo* (Strong's #G4100) emphasize this third component of faith. The publisher's foreword to *The Amplified Bible* contains a significant discussion of the word "believe." As it points out, most people believe in Christ in the ordinary English meaning of the word. That is, most people mentally believe that Christ lived, was the Son of God, and died on the cross to save sinners. However, according to *The Amplified Bible*, no single English word can adequately convey the intended meaning of the Greek word *pisteuo*, which most translations render "believe." Here is *The Amplified Bible's* definition of *pisteuo*...

"It means 'to adhere to, trust, to have faith in; to rely on.' Consequently, the words, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ...' really mean to have an absolute personal reliance upon the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior."

-*"The Amplified Bible,"* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1965, publisher's foreword.

W.E. Vine, in his *"An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words,"* defines *pisteuo* as follows...

"to believe, also to be persuaded of, and hence, to place confidence in, to trust, signifies, in this sense of the word, reliance upon, not mere credence."

-W.E. Vine, *"An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words,"* Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1940, p. 118.

The King James Version sometimes translates it as "commit" or "trust." The noun form of *pisteuo* is *pistis*, which is usually translated as "faith."

Vine defines *pístis* as...

“primarily, firm persuasion, a conviction based upon hearing.”

-*ibid.*, p. 411.

He states that *pisteuo* and *pístis* include a total acknowledgement of God’s revelation, a personal surrender to Him, and a lifestyle inspired by that surrender...

“The main elements in faith in its relation to the invisible God, as distinct from faith in man, are especially brought out in the use of this noun and the corresponding verb, *pisteuo*; they are (1) a firm conviction, producing a full acknowledgement of God’s revelation or truth, e.g. 2 Thessalonians 2:11, 12; (2) a personal surrender to Him, John 1:12; (3) a conduct inspired by such surrender, 2 Corinthians 5:7...All this stands in contrast to belief in its purely natural exercise, which consists of an opinion held in good faith without necessary reference to its proof.”

-*ibid.*

So, through an examination of the Greek words *pístis* and *pisteuo*, we can see evidence for the necessity of all three components that can be identified in the concept of faith: knowledge, assent, and appropriation. But we must emphasize the necessity of the third component – appropriation – as this component is routinely omitted from consideration in many religious circles. Without appropriation, there is no saving faith. For example, many will acknowledge Jesus as Lord and Savior, and yet admit they have not obeyed the gospel. Although they have both knowledge and assent, they have not yet appropriated the gospel to their lives. In other words, they have not

yet acted upon the truth that they have learned. They have not committed themselves to Christ or identified with Him through obedience. In sum, saving faith is an active reliance upon God and His Word, and involves more than simple belief in the common English sense of the word. We cannot separate saving faith from reliance, obedience, and commitment.

The Scriptures give many examples of people who had faith in Christ as Lord, but were not saved. This demonstrates that a person can have a mental belief in Jesus as Lord and Savior, and yet not obey Him, rely on Him, or commit to Him to the point of salvation. Let's examine several...

- According to Jesus, some people do great miracles in His name, yet if they refuse to do God's will, they will not be saved (Matthew 7:21-27). They will have enough faith for miracles but not obey God's Word in all things. They will have faith but not a complete saving faith.
- The Samaritans believed Philip's preaching about Jesus and were baptized, yet they did not receive the Holy Spirit until Peter and John came later (Acts 8:12-17). They were not saved at this initial point, even though they had believed in Jesus as Lord, repented, and been baptized. They had not yet received the Spirit.

In each of these cases, there was mental understanding and assent, but a lack of total commitment to Jesus and obedience to His Word. The people possessed a degree of faith, but not enough to bring

about salvation. Saving faith, then, is inseparably linked with obedience. So then let's examine faith and obedience more closely...

Paul emphasized justification by faith more than any other New Testament writer, yet he strongly insisted that saving faith is inseparably bound up with obedience. He taught that the mystery of God's redemptive plan, the church, has been "made known to all nations for the obedience of faith" (Rom. 16:26). The New International Version translates this last phrase as "made known...so that all nations might believe and obey him." He also stated that God's grace brings "obedience to the faith" (Rom. 1:5). Christ worked through Paul to "make the Gentiles obedient" (Rom. 15:18). Similarly, Luke records that a great number of priests were "obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7). Faith and obedience are so closely linked that a lack of obedience to God is proof of a lack of faith...

"But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?" -Romans 10:16

Many other passages reiterate the essential link between obedience and salvation:

- Jesus said, "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Mt. 7:21).
- Only the man that both hears and does the Lord's Word will be saved (Mt. 7:24-27).

- Jesus also said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (Jn. 14:15), and “If a man love me, he will keep my words” (Jn. 14:23).
- The Lord will punish with everlasting destruction those who “obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thess. 1:7-10).
- Christ has become “the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him” (Heb. 5:9).
- Peter said, “For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begins at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?” (1 Pet. 4:17).
- John gave the following test for a Christian: “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected; hereby know we that we are in him” (1 Jn. 5:1-3).

We find typological examples in the Old Testament as well:

- When God visited death upon the household in Egypt on the night of the first Passover, the Israelites were not automatically protected on the basis of their mental attitude. They were required to apply the blood of the Passover lamb to their doorposts (Ex. 12). Only when they expressed their faith through obedience to God’s command were they safe.

Someone who really believes God's Word will obey it. God's Word teaches repeatedly that one must "obey the gospel," rather than simply believe in it mentally (2 Thess. 1:7-10, 1 Peter 4:17, Rom. 10:16). Further ahead in the study, we will discuss the details of how one "obeys the gospel."

Theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer rightly said...

"Only he who believes is obedient, and only he who is obedient believes."

-Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "The Cost of Discipleship," 2nd ed., R.H. Fuller, trans., New York: Macmillan, 1959, p. 69.

The Bible also teaches that once you obey the gospel and receive initial salvation, good works should follow as evidence of your changed life. Keep in mind that we are saved by our faith in Jesus – which includes obedience to the gospel – and not by our works. We do not achieve salvation by good works, yet Jesus declared that after salvation, the key to determining a truly changed life is to check out their works!

"Wherefore, by their fruits, ye shall know them."
–Matthew 7:20

True saving faith will result in a transformed life, and the works we will then do demonstrate faith. How we live reveals what we believe and whether the faith we profess to have is a living faith. Again, the Bible does not teach a works-based system of righteousness, as if the performance of the works somehow provides or keeps salvation.

Works are not the cause of salvation, but good works are the evidence of salvation.

Faith and good works go hand in hand in a believer's life. Faith without works that demonstrate your faith is a dead faith because the lack of works reveals an unchanged life or a spiritually dead heart. The "works" you will do after receiving salvation will simply be different from the "works" you did as an unbeliever!

James wrote of the inseparableness of faith and works...

"What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?"

-James 2:14

"Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.

Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?

Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?

Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?

And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.

Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.” –James 2:17-24

“For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.” –James 2:26

On the surface, the writings of Paul in Romans we examined earlier and these writings of James may appear contradictory. However, the writings of Paul and James complement each other and fit together into a harmonious whole. Let’s discuss how...

Paul emphasized that we are saved by faith in Jesus, not by our works. God has purchased our salvation for us and we accept it by faith; we do not purchase salvation by good works.

James likewise recognized that “every good gift and every perfect gift is from above” (James 1:17), including salvation. He pointed out that the kind of faith that saves will necessarily produce works. In other words, we cannot demonstrate faith apart from works. The only way God judges our faith is through our response. Faith is meant to be a life-changing force that encompasses your whole life.

Paul cited Abraham as an example of justification by faith (Gen. 15:6, Rom. 4:1-3). James used the same example to show that faith can only be demonstrated by works. Without works, Abraham’s faith would have been dead. What if Abraham had said, “I believe God,” but refused to offer up Isaac? According to James, he would not have had true faith and so would not have been justified. God Himself told

Abraham after he had willingly offered Isaac, “I will bless thee...because thou hast obeyed my voice” (Gen. 22:16-18).

Paul’s description of Abraham’s faith leads to the same conclusion (Rom. 4:18-21). This passage does not describe mental assent apart from works but rather active faith that supported Abraham in his conduct for many years – faith that caused him to trust and commit himself wholly to God.

Any remaining confusion clears when we realize that Paul and James used the same terms in somewhat different ways and contexts. In Romans, faith means true faith in God with all that it entails (obedience, etc.); in James, it means mental assent that could fail to affect conduct, which would not be true, living faith at all. In Romans, works means dead works that can be done apart from faith; in James, it means living works that can be done only through faith and that will attest to the existence of faith. Further, in Romans, “justified” means, “declared righteous by God”; in James, it means, “shown to be righteous.” Vine commented on this harmony between Paul and James...

“In regard to justification by works, the so-called contradiction between James and the Apostle Paul is only apparent...Paul has in mind Abraham’s attitude towards God, his acceptance of God’s word...James (2:21-26) is occupied with the contrast between faith that is real and faith that is false, a faith barren and dead, which is not faith at all.”

-Vine, pp. 625-26.

So, it is evident that Paul and James both agreed that saving faith would produce a life-changing reliance upon God, evidenced by works. Paul taught that we are saved through faith; James taught that saving faith will produce works and is only demonstrated by works. If works do not come with a person's faith, there is something wrong with his faith.

Hebrews 11 beautifully illustrates the complementary relationship between faith and works (we encourage you to examine this chapter on your own). Its main purpose is to show how necessary faith is and to show what it will produce. It names many Old Testament heroes and records their deeds done "by faith." The passage demonstrates that faith will always produce works and that it can only be shown by works. Every time the writer described someone's faith, he listed the actions that faith resulted in.

So, to summarize, we certainly are saved by grace through faith. We rely on God's work and not our own works to bring salvation. However, this does not relieve us of our responsibility to respond to God, to obey Him, and to act upon our faith.

Before moving on to the next section, it is important to address a well-known Scripture passage that is commonly used in the denominational world to promote a salvation message that only involves mental assent and verbal confession.

The passage we must examine is Romans 10:8-10...

"But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in

thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach;
That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt
believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou
shalt be saved.

For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the
mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

-Romans 10:8-10

Some interpret this passage to mean that salvation comes automatically if one mentally assents that Jesus rose from the dead and verbally confesses that He is Lord. However, this interpretation contradicts the truth that saving faith includes appropriation through obedience. Under this view, many who do not even claim to be living for God would be saved. Even the devils would be saved, for they know Jesus is alive, confess Him verbally, and believe in one God (Mt. 8:29, James 2:19). Clearly, such a superficial understanding of this passage is inadequate.

This becomes even more apparent as we continue reading this chapter of Romans 10. Verse 13 says...

“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

-Romans 10:13

Does this mean that everyone who verbalizes the name of Jesus is saved? Certainly not, or else the name of Jesus would be merely a magical formula. Moreover, Verse 16 teaches that a lack of obedience indicates a lack of faith...

“But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?” –Romans 10:16

Many will verbally confess Jesus as Lord and call on His name, but only those who actually do God’s will by obeying the gospel will be saved. Despite one’s verbal confession of faith, if he refuses to obey the gospel, he does not have saving faith.

If this is so, then what is the correct interpretation of Romans 10:8-10? First, we must realize that Paul was writing to Christians who had already been saved. His purpose was to remind them of how accessible salvation really is (Verse 8). He did not have to explain the new birth of salvation in detail because his readers had already experienced it. He was simply reminding them that the foundation of salvation remains faith in Christ and the gospel and in public confession of this faith to the world in which they lived. Again, we cannot divorce a mental or verbal assent from obedience to the gospel. True saving faith involves obedience. We must not isolate this one passage that was written to a body of saved believers who had already obeyed the gospel and interpret it outside of the rest of the New Testament. The intention of this passage is not to function as a detailed salvation message, as those it was written to had already obeyed the gospel plan of salvation. Again, we will discuss obedience to the gospel plan in the sections ahead.

Let’s now examine one of the passages we just referenced, in more detail...

“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”
–Romans 10:13

This passage has been used to promote a salvation message highlighted by a verbal confession of Jesus as Lord. But as alluded to above, this passage obviously cannot be saying that whoever orally invokes the name of Jesus will receive automatic salvation. Saving faith includes more than just oral confession of Christ (Mt. 7:21).

The main point of Romans 10:13 is not to give a formula for salvation but to teach that salvation is for all. The emphasis is on the word “whosoever.” Paul quoted this verse to support his statement that...

“For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.”
–Romans 10:12

This quotation originally appears in Joel 2:32, which follows Joel’s prophecy concerning the latter-day outpouring of the Spirit upon all flesh (Joel 2:28-29) and the latter-day judgment of God (Verses 30-31). Joel 2:32 explains that all who call upon the name of the Lord will be delivered from this judgment.

Peter applied Joel’s prophecy to the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:21) – although in the most ultimate sense, it will be poured out upon Israel in the Millennium. Furthermore, Ananias commanded Paul (who wrote Romans 10:13) to call on the name of the Lord at water baptism (Acts 22:16).

In summary, we draw two conclusions about “calling on the name of the Lord.” First, it does not proclaim an “easy believism” salvation formula, but rather teaches that God’s salvation is freely available to all who seek Him and call upon Him in faith. Second, if one truly calls on the Lord, he will receive His Spirit and call on His name at baptism – both part of obedience to the gospel, which will be discussed ahead in our study.

As we close this section on faith, here is an analogy that may help to put what we have learned into perspective. Suppose Person 1 tells Person 2, “Meet me at the bank tomorrow morning at 10:00 AM and I will give you \$1,000.” (Arriving at the bank tomorrow morning at 10:00 AM is the condition for receiving the gift.) If Person 2 really believes Person 1, he will appear at the appointed place and time. (Faith necessarily produces trust, response, reliance, and obedience.)

If Person 2 shows up, has he somehow “earned” the money? Of course not, because the money is a free gift. Yet, his appearance is a necessary condition that must be met in order to receive the gift. (Grace on Person 1’s part, and faith enacted by obedience on Person 2’s part.) If Person 2 fails to show up, he will not receive the gift and the responsibility for the failure will fall totally on him. (Lack of faith in the promise.) Similarly, we must respond to God in faith by obedience to the gospel of Christ. If we do, God will graciously grant us salvation totally as a free gift and not as an earned right. If we do not respond in obedience to God’s Word, we will not receive salvation, and the blame will rest totally upon us for our lack of faith.

So, we have learned that the doctrines of grace and faith do not eliminate the necessity of the new birth of salvation through obedience to the gospel, but rather they explain how we begin to enter into it. They lay the groundwork whereby we can respond to God's grace through obedient saving faith. The doctrine of grace teaches that salvation is a free gift from God that we do not earn or deserve. The doctrine of faith teaches that we receive this free gift of salvation by relying totally and exclusively on Christ and His gospel. Faith is the means by which we appropriate God's grace, yield to Him, and allow Him to perform His saving work in us.

Since we now recognize that man has a role in the process of salvation, in the sections ahead, we will begin to discover what exactly his role is. The first concept we need to look at involves understanding the differences between initial, progressive, and ultimate salvation.

The Phases Of Salvation

God's eternal plan of salvation, present in the mind of God before the creation of the world, is understandable, universal, and involves man's humble acceptance and participation. But before beginning our discussion of the gospel plan of salvation, let us first briefly point out an important consideration that is frequently overlooked.

Often, within Christianity, we use the term "salvation" in a very general way. But it's helpful to actually break that term down Biblically, and understand that what we refer to as "salvation" actually means something slightly different depending upon the context in which we use it. There are three contexts in which we use this term. We can understand then that "salvation" has three "phases." Let's begin by discussing the first...

-Initial Salvation:

(the point at which an individual initially "becomes" saved)

When we speak of obedience to the gospel plan of salvation, we are referring to initial salvation. Obedience to the gospel plan of salvation is what puts the believer into the church, which Biblically is sometimes called the body of Christ. This may take place basically all at one time, or according to the individual's willingness and response, may take place over a lengthier period of time. Unfortunately, many start out on this road but ultimately never fully respond to the promptings of the Lord. Additionally, many are stalled and/or detoured by false

doctrine and misunderstandings of Scripture, and never complete the Biblical pattern.

-Progressive Salvation:

(the period of time between initial salvation and ultimate salvation)

When we speak of progressive salvation, we are referring to an individual who has already undergone obedience to the gospel plan of initial salvation. After the individual enters the body of Christ, that person must live in a constant state of readiness due to two factors.

First, the Bible instructs the believer of the imminence of the return of Christ for His church. We term this the rapture. Because we do not know exactly when it will occur, and it could occur at any time, we must maintain a spiritual state of readiness. 1 Thessalonians 5 describes the believers as being “children of the light,” who remain soberly and vigilantly watching for the return of the Lord, rather than being “of the night,” that “that day (the Day of the Lord) should overtake you as a thief.”

Secondly, no person knows when his or her own life will end. Tragic life-ending accidents take place daily. For this reason, we must remain attentively walking with the Lord. The Bible makes it very clear that we after receiving initial salvation, can forsake this gift and go back out into the world, again becoming unregenerate.

Nowhere does the Bible teach a doctrine of “eternal security” as it is promulgated in the denominational world. This refers to the idea

commonly taught in many denominational churches, that after receiving initial salvation, you can at some later point decide to completely abandon the faith, and yet still somehow be saved. God does not revoke your free will once you receive initial salvation. Rather, the Bible instructs the believer to “run, that ye may obtain” (1 Cor. 9:24). Scripture teaches that to turn away from salvation will actually leave you in a worse situation than before you were saved! Let’s examine some of these very clear passages...

“For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.

For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.

But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.” -2 Peter 2:20-22

“But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die.”

-Ezekiel 18:24

“It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him:

If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us:” -2 Timothy 2:11-12

“Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.”

-Revelation 2:4-7

“Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.”

-Romans 11:22

The following passage makes it clear that there are some who after partaking in salvation, again turn back to the world, denying God in their minds, and will never return again to a state of salvation.

“For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,

And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,

If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.” -Hebrews 6:4-6

Jesus Himself said that those who truly believed in Him would “take

up His cross and follow” Him (Matthew 16:24). The Bible calls into question the “belief” of anyone who is not following Jesus, whether they have turned away from being a believer or they have never become one. Another sign of a true believer is that he does not practice sin (meaning live in a state of continual, purposeful sin), although nobody is completely without sin while in their humanity.

The early church endured great persecution for their faith. Many were put to death simply because they would not renounce the name of Jesus. Yet many in denominational Christianity spread the false doctrine that teaches you cannot “lose your salvation.” Let the painful, torturous, gruesome deaths of so many Christians who apparently did not agree stand as a testimony against this error! If the Apostles and early Christians believed the “eternal security” doctrine, would so many have endured horrific torture rather than simply consenting to verbally renounce the name of Jesus, thinking they would be saved anyway? We must diligently examine the Word of God to ensure that we are rightly dividing it, and interpreting it within the proper context!

We must refrain from believing in a doctrine that would teach that if you at one time were a true believer and follower of Christ, but have now absolutely rejected following Him, you are still in the body of Christ and will be saved. The Bible instructs the true believer to be separate from the world and to remain faithful unto the end in order to receive ultimate salvation.

“That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ:” -1 Timothy 6:14

-Ultimate Salvation:

(the point at which salvation is complete, and the believer receives full glorification and eternal life)

“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;”

-2 Corinthians 4:17

Ultimate salvation is the receiving of eternal life with Jesus Christ our Lord. At that point, we are free from sin and earthly temptation. Nothing will ever be able to separate us from the Lord at this time. We will also be free from death, corruption and decay of our physical bodies, which will be transformed into eternally incorruptible bodies.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

-John 3:16

Before continuing, we need to clarify one commonly used term in Christianity, which is central to this topic. This term is the rapture. The word English rapture refers to a state or experience of being carried away. In other words, it means to be carried away in spirit or in body.

-<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/rapture> (Retrieved 1/10/18)

The rapture of the church means the literal carrying away of the church from earth to heaven by God. Rapture is a term not found in

the English Bible, but is a term that we use to refer to this supernatural, instantaneous “catching away” of the church described in Scripture. You may ask, “if the word rapture is not found in the English Bible, where do we get this term?”

The English word “rapture” comes from the Latin “rapiemur,” which is the word Jerome used to translate the Greek word “harpazo” (Strong’s #G726 – meaning, “to pluck up, to seize, to catch away”) in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 and other passages.

-<https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/kjv/harpazo.html> (Retrieved 1/10/18)

Jerome (c. 347-420 A.D.) translated the Greek Bible into Latin. The original New Testament manuscripts were written in Greek, but later translated into Latin, English, and other languages.

So, in other words, the English word, “rapture,” simply comes from the Latin translation, “rapiemur,” of the Koine Greek word, “harpazo,” in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 and other places. Almost all modern Bibles translate this word as “caught up”.

“Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up (Greek, “harpazo”) together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

-1 Thessalonians 4:17

Elsewhere, this term “harpazo” is used to describe how the Spirit caught up Philip near Gaza and brought him to Caesarea (Acts 8:39) and to describe Paul’s experience of being caught up into the third heaven (2 Cor. 12:2-4). Thus, there can be no doubt that the word is

used in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 to indicate the actual removal of people from earth to heaven. It is at this rapture event that we will be instantly changed into a “glorified” (likely inter-dimensional) body and caught up to the Lord.

Note: The rapture is not to be confused with Jesus’ Second Coming. Jesus’ Second Coming to the earth will take place at the end of the Great Tribulation (the second half of the final seven-year period on earth). We believe the Scriptures are clear that the rapture takes place before the beginning of the final seven years. The subject of the timing of the rapture and its distinction from the Second Coming is an intensive study on its own, and is not always agreed upon within Christianity.

Let’s continue...

The believer is to remain in a constant state of eager readiness, awaiting the return of Jesus Christ for His church at the rapture.

“Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.” -1 Thessalonians 5:16

At His return, the believer’s physical body will be transformed into a glorified, spiritual, heavenly body. The promise to the believers is that they will receive a glorified body, eternal life, and citizenship in heaven as their part of being the bride of Christ forever.

“But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to

bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.”

-Philippians 3:20-21 (NIV)

Paul expounds further on this subject in 1 Corinthians...

“Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.”

-1 Corinthians 15:50-54

John also writes concerning this subject, assuring the believers that when Jesus returns and we see Him, we will be able to see Him in His true form and identity because we will be of that same type of body!

“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”

-1 John 3:2

This is clearly a statement indicating that physical human eyes cannot perceive him “as he is.” Humanity (possibly as a result of the curse in Genesis) is limited to operation in the four physical dimensions (length, width, height and time). However, we must recognize that there is a world that is even more vivid and more “real” than the so-called “reality” we are familiar with. The Bible continually alludes to this world, which we sometimes refer to as the spiritual world, or the realm of the supernatural.

Particle physicists may refer to this world as the hyper dimensions (dimensions exceeding the four knowable dimensions we live in). In fact, the physics community now tells us that there are probably at least ten dimensions, with the remaining six being scientifically inferable but not directly accessible to us.

-Michio Kaku, “Hyperspace,” New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.

-<https://www.universetoday.com/48619/a-universe-of-10-dimensions/> (Retrieved 3/02/18)

This supernatural world exists all around us, but just out of our “reach,” in a sense. Paul depicts our inability to fully see into that world at the present time, but assures the believer that at a future point (which we have shown to be the return of Jesus Christ), we will be able to see clearly into those extra dimensions.

“For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.”

-1 Corinthians 13:12

Jesus, when He was in His glorified body after His resurrection, was seen appearing in locked rooms, materializing and dematerializing out of thin air, and displaying other similar feats considered impossible by our conventional understanding of physics. This apparently gives us an idea of what it will be like to be able to move in the extra dimensions upon receiving our glorified bodies.

Jesus alludes to this in the following passage, as He declares that the believer, when receiving his glorified body, will be “like the angels in heaven.” Jesus implied that because we will be eternal, there will be no need for marriage and procreation, as that is a mechanism provided for humanity to multiply and continue to exist. Since we currently are in our physical existence, death is assured to all. Therefore, currently there is the need to procreate in order for humanity to continue on. In heaven, there will be no need for this, as death will be done away with!

“For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.”

–Matthew 22:30

So, the ultimate anticipation for the believer is this ultimate phase of salvation, where we will exist eternally with our Savior, Christ, in a realm free of sin, pain, and hurt. At this time, we will no longer exist within a physical body, but instead, will enjoy a glorified body probably similar to the type of body Christ had following His resurrection.

As we conclude our exploration of the phases of salvation, let’s recognize the incredible privilege we have to follow in this salvation

provided to us by our Savior, Christ. What an amazing opportunity to personally know the Creator of the Universe – yet at the same time, One who so desperately wanted to bridge the gap between us that He willingly went to the cross on our behalf!

In the following section, we will explore one last foundational subject before beginning our study of the gospel plan of salvation.

The Purpose Of The Church

In this final introductory section before beginning to discuss the gospel plan of salvation in its specifics, we will continue to build the foundation in order to gain a fuller understanding of the purpose of our salvation as it relates to this distinct and unique entity known as the church.

The nation of Israel and the church each have distinct origins and destinies. A study of the Old Testament will reveal that God made certain covenants with Israel. However, you will find that all of our rights and privileges as members of the church ultimately derive from these covenants. There are four in particular, that are absolutely vital for an understanding of both the Old and New Testaments:

- The Abrahamic Covenant
- The Mosaic (Old) Covenant
- The Davidic Covenant
- The New Covenant (from which the New Testament gets its name)

Because, it is not the main focus of this study, we will not indulge in an in-depth examination of each at this time. But what we will do is endeavor to briefly understand the panorama of Old and New Testament history through very briefly touching upon these covenants given to Israel, and understanding how they were intended to lead into the New Covenant – the final covenant given not only to Israel, but as we will find out, extended to all mankind. We will explore this panorama of Biblical history by focusing on the two entities that

God's plan for humanity centers around – Israel and the church, the recipients of the provisions of these covenants. We will however, discuss the New Covenant in more depth throughout the remaining parts of our study, as it pertains directly to the church.

-Israel vs. the Church:

Let's begin our overview of these crucial covenants given by God. Like we said, we will do this by looking at it from the standpoint of Israel and the church.

First, before even touching upon these covenants, it is vital to recognize that Israel and the church each have distinct origins and distinct destinies. We must not view the church as a "replacement" to Israel. God made certain immutable and unconditional promises to Israel that He still intends to keep! Although in a sense, much of what was pictured in the Old Testament is fulfilled in the Christian experience of the New Testament, it is not accurate to say that God has permanently turned away from Israel and that the modern-day church is now Israel. Replacement Theology, an erroneous doctrine commonly taught in many Christian churches, teaches that God's plans for Israel are finished and that Israel has been replaced by the church. This view neglects the unconditional promises God made to Israel and therefore challenges the integrity of God.

Rather, God has a specific plan and destiny in place for the church, as well as for Israel. Israel is not the church and the church is not Israel. The Old Testament saints are not part of the church (the bride of Christ). We wish to help you understand in this study not

only the differences between the two, but also to emphasize the unique and special way that God views His bride, the church!

So, as we begin, let's start by defining our terms. First, what do we mean by Israel, and what was Israel's purpose?

You cannot understand Israel (or the Bible itself for that matter) without understanding the progression of the covenants God made with Israel and her ancestors. Around 4,000 years ago, God made an unconditional covenant with His chosen servant Abram (later called Abraham). The primary part of this covenant – the Abrahamic Covenant – was that through Abram's descendants (specifically, through the nation of Israel) all the nations for all time would be blessed (Gen. 12:3, Gen. 15, and 22:18).

So, how are the nations blessed? The answer, is that like we already mentioned, all of our blessings ultimately derive from all of these covenants. But let's begin to discuss this in more detail...

Mankind is blessed by the written Word of God coming to us through Israel – the Old Testament, founded upon the Torah, or 5 books of Moses. At the heart of the Old Testament is the Mosaic Covenant, or the Law. God chose the tribes of Israel to be the original recipients of His Word. It started with this Law, as in the Ten Commandments – or the covenant made with Moses, and was fulfilled when Christ came (Mt. 5:17).

Once received, the Word of God was to spread throughout the world to all nations. Through the writings of the Israelite prophets, we

recognize that Israel's mission was to be a light unto the nations. But through these prophetic Old Testament writings, we also see that God began to reveal that there would ultimately be a New Covenant, which would be the fulfillment of what the Old Covenant pointed towards.

Through the inspired Scriptures, we receive moral and ethical guidelines for correct living, guidelines as to how to please God, understanding of the past, explanations for the origin of man and for the creation, and visions/explanations of the future. The world need look no further for "truth"; it is found in the oracles of God which were originally committed to Israel.

But mankind was not only blessed through Israel by the written Word. We were also blessed by the coming of the Word made flesh. Tracing through the descendants of Abraham following that initial Abrahamic Covenant, we find the story of the Old Testament, and see that covenant reconfirmed with his son Isaac, and then his grandson Jacob. Jacob then had twelve sons that became the twelve tribes of Israel. But specifically, the tribe of Judah is given 'royal lineage' in terms of a scepter (Gen 49:10). This symbolized kingship and led to the royal house of David (a descendant of Judah), whom God also made an eternal covenant with – the Davidic Covenant, promising the eternal reign of one of David's descendants. We later find this Messianic promise to be fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

Following the genealogies given to us in the gospels, brings us to Joseph and Mary – the virgin who through miraculous conception of the Spirit, bore Jesus. God promised Jesus the throne of David (Lk.

1:32) which He will rule from in the future on earth (a time period called the Millennial Kingdom), but Jesus' mission at that time was the reconciliation of sinful mankind to God. Through Christ's death on the cross, everyone who believes in Him – the resurrected Christ – and follows Him, is reconciled to God. This is the fulfillment of the New Covenant spoken of by the prophets. It makes available the gospel plan of salvation we will learn about later in this study.

Note: It is important to recognize that this New Covenant was promised to Israel, and when it was initially poured out on Pentecost, the first believers were all Jewish. But as we read in the Book of Acts, it was soon extended to the Gentiles as well (or the non-Jewish nations). However, we should recognize that during the Millennial Kingdom, this New Covenant fulfillment for Israel (as foretold by the prophets) will be completely fulfilled as Israel is restored to righteousness during this time. As a nation, they have not yet received this. But let's get back to the New Covenant's initial outpouring...

After the coming of Christ and outpouring of the New Covenant (the founding of the church), the New Testament was soon written (based on the fulfillment of this New Covenant). This latter portion of the Bible details the life and works of Christ, the historical record of the birth of the church, and the letters (or epistles) to the churches, instructing us on Christian living. Almost all of the New Testament writers were Jewish as well ("Jew" being the later name used to call Israelites, being derived from the name Judah, or Judea, the region of Israel given to the Tribe of Judah, whose capital was Jerusalem).

So, both the written Word of God, as well as the Word of God made flesh were both given to the world through the means of Israel. So, in this way, all mankind has been blessed through Israel – showing fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham all the way back at the Abrahamic Covenant.

But God’s plans for Israel are not yet finished. Bible prophecy reveals that, at the end of this age, world events in God’s plan will once again be centered around Israel, as God’s program continues towards completion.

Let’s now define the church. What do we mean by the church, and what is the church’s purpose?

The church was the first recipient of the New Covenant, when both the New Covenant and the church were simultaneously inaugurated on the Day of Pentecost described in Acts 2. It was at this time that the outpouring of the Holy Ghost – the basis of this New Covenant – took place. And the church on earth will end with the rapture, or the catching away of the church to heaven. The church will then return with Christ at the Second Coming, and rule with Him on earth during the Millennium. Following the Millennium, we will forever be with Christ.

The purpose of the church is the purpose of all of creation itself – God is love, but love needs a be-loved. It is God’s intention that His image creation – humanity – becomes that beloved. But as we’ve discussed already, humanity needed redemption due to sin. Sin was a necessary part of free-will. Love requires free-will. God’s plan from the beginning was to redeem humanity back to Himself.

The New Testament likens the church to a bride, with Christ presented as the Bridegroom. The purpose of the church as the pure righteous bride, is to be that “be-loved”. Through the gospel plan of salvation, we can enter into the redemption that Christ’s death and resurrection provided. We receive new life through this process by the Spirit – this being the New (and final) Covenant God will make with man. Through this covenant, we can be reconciled back to God for eternity, completing the epic story of the Bible.

Now that we have a basic understanding of Israel and the church, let’s further our perceptions by examining some of their distinctions. We will examine 15 points of distinction.

1. Israel: Israel is a specific nation chosen by God and sustained by covenant promises (Deut. 7:6-9). Not all individuals in this chosen nation are saved (Rom. 9:6; 11:28).

The Church: The church is a called-out assembly of believers out of every nation, who have been baptized into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). Every true member of the body of Christ is saved (we don’t mean every member of a particular local church”). There are multitudes of professing believers who will not be saved.

2. Israel: Israel traces its origin as a people to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Jacob, later renamed Israel, being the father of the twelve tribes), and its origin as a nation to the Exodus from Egypt and the giving of the Mosaic Law at Mt. Sinai (Ex. 19).

The Church: The church traces its origin to the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) when believers were first placed into the body of Christ by obedience to the gospel plan of salvation.

3. Israel: God's program for Israel centered in Jerusalem (Mt. 23:37) and will again center in Jerusalem during the Tribulation (Mt. 24:15-20) and during the Millennium (Isa. 2:1-5).

The Church: God's program for His church began in Jerusalem and extended to the uttermost parts of the earth (Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8). The church is identified with the risen Christ, not with any earthly city. However, in the ultimate eternal sense, the New Jerusalem – a spiritual Jerusalem not made with human hands – is the church's ultimate dwelling place (Rev. 21).

4. Israel: The hope and expectancy of Israel was/is earthly, centering on the establishment of the Kingdom of the Messiah foretold by the prophets (Jer. 23:5-8; Isa. 2:1-5; 11:1-16).

The Church: The hope and expectancy of the church is heavenly, centering on the glorious appearing of Christ at the rapture to take His people to heaven (John 14:1-3; Phil. 3:20-21; Col. 3:1-4; 1 Thess. 4:13-18).

5. Israel: God's purpose and program for Israel was revealed in the Old Testament Scriptures.

The Church: God's purpose and program for the church was hidden in the Old Testament, and was revealed through the New Testament apostles and prophets by the Spirit (Eph. 3:5). Paul considered it his high privilege to reveal the uniqueness of the church.

6. Israel: Israel's history involved animal sacrifices, which acted as a shadow of what was to come in the death of Jesus Christ, the ultimate spotless Lamb.

The Church: The church's history does not involve animal sacrifices. Rather, the OT practice of animal sacrifices to atone for sins is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. The Messiah's sacrifice is commemorated by means of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:23-29).

7. Israel: Israel's history involves a physical Temple for worship.

The Church: In the church, God manifests His glory in His believers, both individually and collectively, designating them (their bodies) as His temple (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19-20; Eph. 2:21-22). This is accomplished by the indwelling presence of the Holy Ghost.

8. Israel: Israel's history involves a Levitical (of the Tribe of Levi) priesthood limited to the sons of Aaron, and excluded most Israelites.

The Church: Whereas Israel had a priesthood, the church is a royal priesthood (1 Pet. 2:9).

9. Israel: Male Jews were circumcised as a symbol of the Abrahamic Covenant. Believing Jews were also figuratively circumcised in the heart (Jer. 4:4).

The Church: In the church, true believers enjoy an internal circumcision of the heart, not made with hands (Col. 2:11; Phil. 3:3; Gal. 6:15-16). Physical circumcision is not required.

10. Israel: Israel was under the Law of Moses as a rule of life.

The Church: The church is under a “better” covenant (Heb. 8) – the New Covenant.

11. Israel: Unbelieving Jews were physical children of Abraham and spiritual children of the devil (John 8:37-44).

The Church: Every believer in Christ (every true member of the church, whether Jew or Gentile) is a figurative “child of Abraham” and a child of God (Rom. 4:11-12; Gal. 3:26-29). This statement does not mean that church age believers are literal Jews or Israelites, but rather that they embody what it truly means to be a “child of Abraham.”

12. Israel: Israel was to observe the Sabbath Day in accordance with Old Testament law (Exodus 20:8). Sabbath observance will also apparently take place in the Tribulation (Mt. 24:20) and in the Millennium (Ezek. 46:1, 3).

The Church: Though the Sabbath Day was the “rest” Israel was instructed to observe, the fulfillment of what that rest was intended to be is manifested in the experience of the believer being filled with the Holy Ghost (Isa. 28:11-12). Rather than setting aside a certain day and observing Mosaic Law, the church “rests” in Christ on a daily basis (Col. 2:16).

13. Israel: Believing Jews prior to Pentecost, believing Jews during the Tribulation, and believing Jews during the Kingdom reign of Christ are not members of the body of Christ (the church).

The Church: Believing Jews and Gentiles from Pentecost to the rapture who have obeyed the gospel are members of the body of Christ (the church).

14. Israel: Israel’s place of worship centered in Jerusalem (Dan. 6:10; John 4:20) and this will also be true in the Tribulation (Dan. 9:27) and in the Millennium (Isa. 2:1-5).

The Church: The church’s place of worship is “Where two or three are gathered together in My Name” (Mt. 18:20; John 4:21-24). Christ is in the midst of His churches (Rev. 1:13, 20).

15. Israel: Israel is likened to the wife of Jehovah/Yahweh, often an unfaithful wife or a whore (Hosea).

The Church: The church is the beloved bride of Christ (2 Cor. 11:2; Rev. 19:7-8) to be one day presented as a blameless and spotless virgin (Eph. 5:27).

Now that we have a basic understanding of Israel and the church, in the next section we will continue into the part of this study in which we gain understanding from the Scriptures on exactly how to enter into this unique entity called the church!

The Gospel Plan Of Salvation - The New Birth

Because, this is such a vital topic, but also one in which so much confusion and error is centered on, it is recommended that at this time the reader takes a moment to enter into prayer, asking the Lord to open up his or her spiritual understanding to His precious truth.

To determine what is truth and what is error, we must depend upon the guidance and leadership of the Holy Spirit. You might say, "All we need to do is simply read the Bible." That is partly true in that the Bible is our source of truth, but we need the Holy Spirit to guide us through the Bible, giving understanding of what we read. It is amazing how many people read the Bible and yet don't apprehend the plain truths written therein – especially when they have already been taught a Biblical concept incorrectly. We need the Holy Spirit to illuminate our understandings in cooperation with diligent study and exposition utilizing sound Biblical hermeneutics (methods of interpretation). The Spirit makes the written Word alive to your understanding and gives revelation.

"Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." -2 Corinthians 3:6

Jesus said, "When He the Spirit of Truth is come, He will guide you into all Truth" (John 16:13), speaking of the Holy Ghost. He also said that these things are "hidden from the eyes of the wise and prudent,

and revealed to babes such as would learn” (Mt. 11:25). The Bible says, “The natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God...neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:14). It is essential to recognize that the Bible is not a book that can be discerned solely through academic research. Any time you open up the Bible to read and study, you should always enter with prayer. Hand in hand, prayer and study will allow the Holy Ghost to begin to bring the letters to life and make the Word real to you. May the Spirit of Truth guide us as we continue our study.

The gospel is a word we hear frequently, but often do not recognize its true meaning. The English word gospel means “good news,” and is a translation of the original Greek word used, “evangelion” (Strong’s #G2098).

-“Expository Dictionary of Bible Words,” p. 446.

However, we must look to 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 in order to understand the Biblical definition of what the gospel actually is.

“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures:” -1 Corinthians 15:1-4

So, Paul here declares unto us that the gospel is by definition, the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He also said it is the vehicle by which we are saved! The good news, then, is that Christ's death, burial, and resurrection brings salvation to all who respond in faith. As discussed in a previous section, by definition, saving faith includes the appropriation or application of the gospel to our lives. How do we do that, according to the Scriptures? Let's continue...

It is certainly necessary to understand what the gospel is, but it is also equally important to understand what to do with that knowledge. 2 Thessalonians 1:8 tells us that it is not sufficient to simply believe that Jesus died, was buried, and rose again, but that obedience to the gospel is also necessary!

“In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:”
-2 Thessalonians 1:8

And again in 1 Peter and Romans we see the New Testament writers referring to the necessity of obeying the gospel...

“For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begins at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?” -1 Peter 4:17

If you read this verse with precision, you can see that Peter is equating the church (here called the house of God) with those who have obeyed the gospel. In other words, if you have not obeyed the gospel, you are not part of the church – you are a part of the other

group inferred in this passage. To see this even more clearly, let's just read the verse that follows – Verse 18. Follow the dichotomy that Peter will reinforce...

“And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” -1 Peter 4:18

So, Peter creates a clear dichotomy with “the house of God/righteous” on one side and “them that obey not the gospel/the ungodly and sinner” on the other side. Also, Paul tells us in Romans...

“But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?” –Romans 10:16

So, the New Testament is clear on the absolute necessity of obedience to the gospel. The next question is then, “If the gospel is the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, then how do I ‘obey’ it?” In other words, how might I apply it to my life personally and take part in this salvation plan? God has already performed the most important part of the salvation plan by His grace toward us, through which He underwent this death, burial and resurrection for us. Now, what is our part? How do we respond to this astonishingly generous gift? How do we become personally involved in receiving this gift? After all, a gift is only yours when you move to receive it! How do we take part in this gospel plan through obedience? Paul gives us the answer to these questions in Romans 6:3-5, in which he explains how a person actually identifies with – or appropriates – Christ’s death, burial and resurrection. We will discuss this in detail in the next several sections.

Death: Repentance

As we begin these next several sections, let's be careful to keep in mind the question we are attempting to answer, which was, "How do I obey the gospel, which Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 identified as the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ?" How do we take part in this gospel plan through obedience? In other words, how might I apply it to my life personally and take part in this salvation plan? If Jesus already performed His part, what is my part, since we are clearly commanded to obey the gospel – and not to just mentally believe in it? What did the Apostles teach and practice? We will answer these questions in this – as well as the following several sections. Let's begin...

First of all, we must identify with Jesus' death. Just as Jesus Christ was crucified on the cross, so our "old man" of sin must be crucified and put to death. The "old man" is not the "ability to sin," for this remains with the born-again believer while in the flesh. Nor does our experience of death with Christ eradicate the sinful nature, for the Christian must continue to war against the evil desires of the flesh (Galatians 5:16-17). What is put to death is the dominion and control that the sinful nature has over the unsaved person (Romans 6:12-14). This "death to sin" is called repentance.

Repentance is a realization of the evil of sin, a sorrow that we have committed it, and a resolution to forsake it. It is to change one's mind, in this case, towards sin. The change in your mind will lead to a change in your actions to forsake sin. All humans have sinned, as a result of the fall of Adam and Eve in Genesis. Because of this, we are unable to

fellowship with God, as sin acts as a chasm between us. It has always been God's plan to not only fellowship closely with man, but to marry the church as His bride! Because of His desire to fellowship with us closely for all eternity, He has put together a remarkable plan of redemption for us! However, we as fallen, sinful humans must first recognize our state of sin and understand our need of redemption. Realizing this is part of repentance.

“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;”
–Romans 3:23

When you understand your state of sin, you must die to that sin. Repentance is death to sin. Just as Jesus was put to death by crucifixion upon a cross, our old sinful desires must be figuratively “crucified” and put to death. Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, clearly links these concepts...

“Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin.” –Romans 6:6-7

“Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.” –Romans 6:11-12

Peter also mentions our identification with Christ's death through repentance in the following passage...

“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.” -1 Peter 2:24

Does this mean that we will never again sin or be tempted to sin? Of course not, but when true repentance takes place, there is a meaningful recognition of that sin and a turning away from that lifestyle in order to move in the opposite direction back to God. God’s forgiveness is enough to wipe away the sins of even the individual who was completely bound in sin. However, the forgiveness of God is no excuse to continue willfully sinning, as Paul explains in the following passage.

“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?

God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” –Romans 6:1-2

In the Bible, the word “repent” (Greek, “metanoia” – Strong’s #G3341) means to change one’s mind in turning away from sin.

-“Expository Dictionary of Bible Words,” p. 810.

The Bible tells us that true repentance will result in a change of actions. Notice the New Testament never instructs converts to “accept Jesus into their hearts” (as we often hear in churches today), but rather, it emphatically preaches and requires true repentance! Let’s look at some of these passages – keeping in mind that all of these are in the context of the church.

“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.” –Acts 3:19

“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” –Acts 2:38

“And the times of this ignorance God winked at (or overlooked); but now commandeth all men every where to repent:” –Acts 17:30

“Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.”
–Acts 20:21

So, we see the emphasis on the call to repentance. But what does repentance “look like?” Well, the following verses make it clear that others will be able to recognize whether or not you have truly repented based upon your “fruits” (your actions/lifestyle). True repentance is a change of your mind, and when your mind is truly changed, the result will be that basically every other aspect of you will also be changed for the better!

This of course many not be instantaneous in all areas, as God will continue to lead you after initial repentance as the changed Christian never stops living a “repentant lifestyle” in submission to the leading of the Spirit. But at initial repentance, there will definitely be a dramatic change to one’s mind – as that itself is implied in the definition of the word repentance. Again, repentance means a

dramatic turning away and a change to your thinking. Let's now look at some of these passages that describe how a repentant heart will result in changed behavior...

“Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance...”

–Luke 3:8a

“But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.” –Acts 26:20

“Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:” –Matthew 3:8

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”

–2 Corinthians 5:17

“The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.” –Galatians 5:19-23 (NIV)

It is also important to recognize that faith and repentance should go hand in hand. You cannot have true repentance without faith, and

you cannot have true faith without repentance! True saving faith requires both! If you believe in Jesus as Lord, that faith must move you to action! Repentance only in the mind is no repentance at all. Repentance involves action – usually, very dramatic action!

It is also crucial to understand that repentance is not something you can accomplish by yourself. Jesus said...

“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.” –John 6:44 (NIV)

And Paul tells us...

“Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.” –2 Corinthians 7:10 (NIV)

It takes God to lead you to repentance. It is God who begins to pull at the strings of your heart and draw you unto Himself. It is God who begins to send conviction to you (a feeling of guilt for sin). But you must hear Him and obey! As we have seen in the earlier passages, God is reaching for all to repent! It is up to us now to respond!

“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” –2 Peter 3:9

It is also important not to take the goodness of God as endorsement of a sinful lifestyle. On the contrary, as the following passage

explains, it is His goodness that is designed to lead you to repentance, by showing you His love.

“Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?” –Romans 2:4

At repentance, man confesses his sins to God (Prov. 28:13, Mark 1:4-5, 2:7, 1 John 1:9), decides to forsake it, turns his back on it, and refuses to accept its dominion. He does this to the lusts and desires of the old man and decides to live for God. At that point, Christ's death on the cross becomes effective in his life to enable him to break the bondage of sin. Additionally, there are times to confess to one another, such as when we have wronged someone and seek their forgiveness (Luke 17:3-4, James 5:16). In some cases where possible, the truly repentant person will seek to correct the impact of his past sins upon others. This is called restitution. For example, if he has stolen money, he will repay it (Luke 19:8).

Of course, the decision to repent is not complete in itself, for it brings only limited, temporary power to turn from sin. The completion of the salvation process includes the burial of past sins that takes place at water baptism and the receiving of power to remain victorious over sin through the Holy Ghost (these will be discussed in detail in the following sections). Since to die with Christ does not eradicate the sinful nature in us, we must continue to crucify the desires of the flesh. Although there is an initial point of repentance, you must continue to “die” to sin daily while you are in the physical. You should

not die to sin and then come back alive to it. Paul said “I die daily” in 1 Corinthians 15:31. Other passages describe this as well...

“For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify (put down in death) the deeds of the body, ye shall live.”

–Romans 8:13

“Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.’”

–Matthew 16:24

“And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.” –Galatians 5:24

“Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence (strong sexual desire), and covetousness, which is idolatry:”

–Colossians 3:5-6

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

–Galatians 2:20

So, the Christian convert will initially repent, but then continue on living a lifestyle of repentance – crucifying the desires of the flesh in order to live according to the Spirit. If repentance is death to sin, then the next step in the gospel pattern is burial of that sin.

Burial: Baptism

As we begin this next section on baptism, let's keep in mind the question we are attempting to answer, which was, "How do I obey the gospel, which 1 Cor. 15:1-4 identified as the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ?" How do we take part in this gospel plan through obedience? In other words, how might I apply it to my life personally and take part in this salvation plan? If Jesus already performed His part, what is my part, since we are clearly commanded to obey the gospel – and not to just mentally believe in it? What did the Apostles teach and practice? In the previous section, we began to answer these questions by first identifying the necessity of repentance (or death to sin) in the life of the new believer. We will continue to answer these questions in this section as well as the following several sections. Let's begin...

Following death through repentance, we must also identify with Christ's burial through baptism. Paul clearly explains this in his epistle to the Romans...

"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

–Romans 6:3-4

Paul also echoes this same concept in his epistle to the Colossians...

“Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.” –Colossians 2:12

Through water baptism, we identify with Christ when His body lay dead and buried in the grave. We will find that water baptism is effective only after repentance, that immersion is the Biblical method, and that the name of Jesus is the Biblical formula.

Since baptism follows repentance (death), it actually does signify that the baptized person identifies with the dead and buried state of the man Christ. Since Biblical baptism was only done by total immersion in water, it truly is a burial. Since baptism is done in the name of Jesus, it truly is identification with Him and taking on His name. When an individual undergoes water baptism, it signifies that he has died to sin and is burying that sin.

However, simply identifying with Jesus' burial is not the only purpose of baptism. Baptism is also the medium by which our sins are “washed away” and removed permanently. Under repentance, sins are forgiven. But under baptism, sins are completely washed away. In the Greek, both forgiveness and remission are sometimes used interchangeably. But regardless, we recognize from Scripture the commands that both repentance and baptism are necessary for the forgiveness and permanent removal of sins.

“And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” –Acts 22:16

“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission (removal) of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”

–Acts 2:38

When a person emerges from the waters of baptism, his old lifestyle and his past sins are forever buried and forgotten. Water baptism then, applies Christ’s burial to our lives and is effective for the permanent removal of our sins!

Notice that baptism is in fact a command! Often, we are told in the denominational world that baptism is an “option,” or that it is “secondary to salvation.” The New Testament does not support these manmade ideas, but rather we saw in the verse we just read, the apostle Peter on the birthday of the church at the very first sermon commanding “every one of you” to be baptized in order that your sins may be remitted. Acts 2:38 is an imperative statement – a command!

In like manner, we heed the words of Jesus in Mark...

“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” –Mark 16:16

In the above verse, it is made abundantly clear from the mouth of the Lord Jesus that baptism is an absolute piece of the salvation plan. This passage also implies that belief is the obvious prerequisite to baptism. Notice in the second part of the verse, baptism is not even mentioned. In other words, if you don’t first believe, baptism is irrelevant.

Notice also the command of Jesus to His disciples immediately prior to His ascension as He instructed them on their soon coming ministries to the world...

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:”

–Matthew 28:19

In this passage, it is clear that Jesus commands baptism for all who believe on Him! Jesus never presented it as an option, or simply a ceremonial formality. It is an essential and functional part of salvation! As we will see in the study ahead, the New Testament church and Apostles never portray baptism as just an “option” either.

Paul declares to the Galatians that if they’ve been baptized into Christ, they have put Him on. We can then infer that if we have not been baptized into Christ, we have not put on Christ. If this is not the case, then this verse has no meaning at all. We understand this verse not to simply refer to the water baptism, but also the Spirit baptism, as we will see that both are necessary.

“For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” –Galatians 3:27

Baptism is never pictured as being optional in Scripture or as empty symbolism. Moreover, claiming that baptism is only optional indicates a lack of understanding regarding the actual purpose of baptism. In

order to be buried with Jesus and have our sins washed away we must be baptized!

In the following passage, we see the necessity of water baptism mentioned in reference to salvation, as the author implies that the waters of baptism are as crucial for our salvation as the water was for Noah and his family's salvation during the Flood!

“Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.

The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:”

-1 Peter 3:20-21

So, we are actually told that the waters of the flood act as a prophetic type (or prototype) of baptism (the phrase “like figure” in Verse 21). The water that was certain destruction for the sinful during the Flood, carried Noah and his family to salvation through the ark!

Lastly, it is important to point out that the baptism is not some sort of “magical act.” The water does not wash the sins away, but rather it is the name of Jesus Christ invoked, along with obedience to the proper method of Scriptural baptism that completes the work. Baptism is effective only because God commanded it. When we submit to water baptism according to God's plan, God honors our obedient faith and remits our sin.

In What Name Is Baptism Performed?

Most churches today, unfortunately, are unaware of the importance of the specific mode and formula of baptism described in the Scriptures. As a result of years of being steeped in man-made church tradition and the belief in the doctrine of the Trinity, most denominational churches baptize according to the Trinitarian formula of invoking the titles Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Let's look closer at this and investigate how the early church performed baptism.

First, in order to eliminate confusion, we must look into Matthew 28:19 – the most well-known passage where at first glance, the “Trinitarian baptismal command” seems to appear.

Prior to His ascension, Jesus instructed His disciples in the following way...

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:”

–Matthew 28:19

This passage is one of the recordings of what Christians call the “Great Commission,” – Jesus’ evangelistic command to His Disciples. Many people who read this passage have unfortunately isolated it from the rest of Scripture, and thereby misapplied the proper formula of baptism. Let’s talk about why this passage absolutely does not teach the Trinitarian baptism formula.

First, we need to note that this passage uses the word “name” in the singular. The Disciples, soon to become the Apostles, understood well that the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost was Jesus. This is evidenced in the Book of Acts, which was the historical account of the early church, where we witness the only Biblical record of actual baptisms being performed. Acts consistently records the Apostles baptizing in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Never once is any convert recorded as being baptized in the titles.

The question we must then ask is “Did the Apostles disobey the Lord’s command in Matthew 28:19?” The answer of course, is no! Scripture cannot contradict Scripture, and if we are true students of the Word, we understand it to be inerrant and infallible. The simple answer is that the Apostles understood Jesus’ command and properly applied it.

As the historical account of the early church in the Book of Acts records, the Apostles properly applied Jesus’ command by using that one singular name of Jesus Christ in their baptisms of new converts. According to the Biblical record, we see no deviation from this. But rather, we read of the Apostles consistently performing baptisms by invoking the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Never once anywhere in Acts or anywhere else in Scripture do we ever see anyone getting baptized by invoking the titles “Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.”

Furthermore, it should be noted that the phrase “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” in Matthew 28:19 is actually thought by many scholars to have been a later Catholic-influenced addition, and was not in the original manuscripts. Ample

documentation on this will be provided later on. If this was in fact true (and it clearly does appear to be the case), then the Trinitarian formula is to be found nowhere in the entire Bible, much less actually being applied. However, even with it being there in our English translations, it is not difficult to understand the manner in which baptisms were always performed according to the New Testament (in the name of Jesus).

One of the most incredible features of the Bible is that it seems to have been engineered to anticipate error, mistranslation, and interpolation (counterfeit additions). Nowhere is any one doctrine only limited to one page. The rest of Scripture always clears up any potential confusion. Additionally, to those who understand the Father, Son and Holy Ghost to be Jesus, this passage loses none of its original value or meaning.

*For more information, please refer back to the earlier section entitled [Matthew 28:19](#), found on page 186, or the later section entitled [Historical Evidence Disproving The Trinitarian Baptismal Formula](#), found on page 355.

With that said, let's continue!

Matthew 28:19 is not the only recording of the Great Commission given by Jesus. It is also recorded in two other gospels, Mark and Luke. Let's look at the way it is recorded there in order to gain even more insight.

“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the

gospel to every creature.

He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;”

–Mark 16:15-17

So, we see that Mark records the command to go and baptize, but does not speak of a name in connection with baptism. However, we do see a mention of Jesus’ name in the very next verse. More importantly, as we said, we need to look at how the Apostles obeyed these commands, which we will see in the book of Acts. But first let’s look at Luke’s account of the Great Commission...

“And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”

–Luke 24:47

So here we read a command to preach repentance and remission of sins, in His name (which is fulfilled in Acts 2). If we look at the preceding verse, we see that the pronoun His refers to Christ. So, repentance and remission of sins are to be preached in Jesus’ name! Where do we receive the remission of sins, which is to be preached in Jesus’ name? Well, let’s look at what Jesus’ Disciples did with this command...

On the Day of Pentecost after the initial outpouring of the Holy Ghost on the believers in the Upper Room in Jerusalem, a crowd gathered due to the noise they heard from this event. We will discuss

this in greater detail in a later section, but simply put, the people, when they realized their sinful state, asked Peter what they should do in response to this state? The following was Peter's response! (keep in mind the question we are asking, which is "Where do we receive the remission of sins, which is to be preached in Jesus' name?")

"Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." –Acts 2:38

As we can easily see, the answer to our question is discovered in this foundational gospel command given by Peter on the birthday of the church. We receive the remission of sins when we are baptized in Jesus' name! So, the Luke account of the Great Commission, which parallels the Matthew 28:19 account that uses the titles, actually points us right back to our foundational salvation command found in Acts 2:38 – emphasizing not a Trinitarian formula, but rather the "name of Jesus" formula always used by the apostles!

So, we have three different accounts of what Jesus commanded His Apostles at the Great Commission. We then looked at how they obeyed Jesus' words, as recorded in Acts on the first day of the establishment of the New Testament church. It is also interesting that Matthew, who later wrote Mt. 28:19 (assuming "...in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:" was his original writing, which doesn't seem to be the case), was present as well on the Day of Pentecost when Peter was preaching to the crowd (Acts 1:13). We would expect him to stand up and stop Peter if he was

preaching the wrong thing – or something different than what Christ had commanded them! But we don't see that.

Throughout the Book of Acts, they routinely baptized people in Jesus' name. And when we read Paul's epistles to the churches, we will find out that they too were baptized in Jesus' name. So, it is obvious that Jesus' disciples understood the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost to be Jesus! We reiterate that nowhere in Scripture do we find anyone being baptized using the titles, but rather baptism being only performed in Jesus' name!

Furthermore, the apostles taught that salvation is associated with Jesus' name – and never Trinitarian titles.

“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name (Jesus – Verse 10) under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” –Acts 4:12

Although this verse may not be focusing exclusively on baptism, it is certainly inclusive of it. We see that Jesus is the name by which we are saved, and that there is no other! Furthermore, Paul tells us that everything we do should be done in the name of the Lord Jesus...

“And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.”
–Colossians 3:17

So, according to this passage, we are to do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus. Is it logical then that baptism, one of the most

important events in the life of a believer, would be performed in any other name or group of titles? Certainly not!

Let's now look at the specific examples of new converts being baptized at and after the Day of Pentecost in the New Testament. You will see that none of them mention the titles, but all refer to the Lord Jesus. You should also notice that everywhere the gospel is preached, they all undergo baptism. It is never presented as optional, subsequent, or separate from salvation!

-Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost:

According to Acts 2, three thousand people were saved on the Day of Pentecost! According to Verse 38, they were all instructed to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. According to Verse 41, all three thousand who received his word were baptized! They were all baptized in the name of Jesus Christ and none considered it optional!

“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.

Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.”

-Acts 2:38-41

-The Believers in Samaria:

“But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

(For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)”

–Acts 8:12, 16

-The Gentile Believers in Caesarea:

“And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.”

–Acts 10:48

-The Believers in Ephesus:

“When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.” –Acts 19:5

-The Conversion of Paul:

“And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”

–Acts 22:16

So, Peter, John and the rest of the Apostles baptized in Jesus' name throughout Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria. And Paul re-baptized the believers in Ephesus in Jesus' name who were previously baptized in

John the Baptist's baptism of repentance (Acts 19:1-5). Now let's look at some of the other churches...

-The Christians at Rome:

“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

-Romans 6:3-4

The reason that we are baptized in Jesus' name is that we are being baptized into Jesus. Through baptism, we are taking on His name, similar to the way a woman takes on her husband's name at marriage. Like a bride is then reintroduced with a new name, this passage says that following baptism in Jesus' name, we similarly now turn to walk in the newness of life. The New Testament describes the church as becoming the wife of Christ. For more information on this concept, as well as a deeper dive into the subject of baptism in its relationship to the marriage of Christ and the church, consult the companion study entitled [The Romance Of Redemption: The Marriage Of Jesus Christ And The Church](#).

So, through obedience to baptism in His name, we are saying that we belong to Jesus and we are identifying with Him in His death and burial. Furthermore, this passage in Romans clearly describes baptism in Jesus' name as being tied to the fact that Jesus died, was buried, and resurrected. Even if God were a Trinity, Jesus is the one

who died for us and He is the one who the Christians at Rome were buried with. For that matter, Jesus was the only “member” of the alleged Trinity that was buried at all, making it abundantly clear why we are to be baptized in His name.

-The Christians at Corinth:

“Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?”

-1 Corinthians 1:13

If we follow Paul’s train of thought in this verse, his obvious implication is “No, Jesus Christ was the one crucified for you and so you were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.” So, the believers at Corinth as well as those in Rome were clearly baptized in Jesus’ name.

-The Christians in Galatia:

“For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” –Galatians 3:27

This passage also applies to what we just discussed earlier regarding being baptized “into” Christ and taking on His name. Here, we are told that by being baptized into Jesus’ name, we are actually “putting Him on.” The implication here is that if you have not been baptized into Christ, then you have not put on Christ.

-The Christians at Colossae:

“In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:

Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.” –Colossians 2:11-12

So, in addition to those in Rome, Corinth and Ephesus (as well as Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria), we see that the Christians in Colossae and those in the region of Galatia were all baptized in Jesus’ name. They would not have connected baptism so exclusively with Christ had they routinely baptized using the titles, “Father, Son and Holy Spirit.” As mentioned earlier, the only way that we ever see anyone being baptized in the New Testament, is in Jesus’ name.

-Oral Invocation of the Name of Jesus:

Some contend that “baptism in the name of Jesus” means only in the authority and power of Jesus, and does not mean the name should be uttered orally as part of the baptismal formula. However, the following points of evidence show that the oral invocations of “in the name of Jesus” is the actual formula...

- Baptism in the name of Jesus does not just mean baptism with His power and authority, but rather, the way to invoke His power and authority is to invoke His name in faith. The authority represented by a name is always invoked by actually using the proper name. All the discussion of power and

authority cannot obscure one point: when we actually use a name at baptism it should be the name Jesus.

- The Bible reveals that the name Jesus was orally invoked at baptism. Acts 22:16 says...

“And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”

-Acts 22:16

Here, we find a Biblical command to orally invoke or call the Lord's name (Jesus) at baptism. Some contend that in this verse only the baptismal candidate called the name of Jesus, and not the administrator. This is debatable, but even so, the name Jesus was orally invoked. In general, the baptizer normally invokes the name, but the candidate may also call on the name of Jesus as well, for baptism's validity depends on the candidate's faith, not the baptizer's faith.

The point to remember is that an oral calling did occur, as the Greek word rendered “calling” is “epikaleomai” (Strong's #G1941), which means “to call on” or “to invoke” (Strong, p. 1628). Thus, the Bible states in this verse that the name of Jesus is to be orally invoked at baptism.

- The clear, straightforward, common sense reading of the baptismal passages leads one to believe that “in the name of Jesus” is the baptismal formula. That is the natural, literal reading, and a person must use questionable and twisted

methods of Biblical interpretation to deny that the words mean what they appear to mean. If this is not a formula, it is strange that it appears so many times as if it were a formula, without any explanation to the contrary.

- In other situations, “in the name of Jesus” means orally uttering the name Jesus. For instance, Jesus told His disciples they would pray for the sick in His name (Mark 16:17-18), and James said we should pray for the sick “in the name of the Lord” (James 5:14). When Peter prayed for a lame man, he did actually invoke the name of Jesus orally, as we see recorded in Acts 3:6...

“In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.”
–Acts 3:6

Peter then explained that the man was healed “by the name of Jesus” (Acts 3:16, 4:10). In other words, when the early church prayed for the sick in the name of Jesus, they actually uttered the name Jesus. Likewise, when the early church baptized in the name of Jesus, they actually uttered the name Jesus as part of the baptismal formula.

- If “in the name of Jesus” does not represent a formula, then the Bible gives no formula for Christian baptism. The only other candidate for a baptismal formula would be the wording of Matthew 28:19 – “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” However, if “in the name of Jesus” does not teach a formula, then neither does “in the name of the Father,

and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,” for the grammatical structure is identical in both verses. If “in the name” means “by the authority of” without literally invoking a name, then neither verse gives a formula. If we do not have a formula, then what distinguishes Christian baptism from heathen baptisms, Jewish proselyte baptism, or John’s baptism? If there is no formula, or if the formula does not matter, then why were John’s disciples (who were already believers in Jesus) re-baptized by Paul in the name of Jesus?

Note: As discussed earlier in this study, and will be discussed in more depth in the following section, the Trinitarian wording in Matthew 28:19 is viewed by most theologians and scholars as a later Catholic-inspired insertion into the text. We will discover that the original wording was actually perfectly congruent with that we see recorded in the other Scriptural examples regarding baptism. But let’s continue...

- Theologians and church historians recognize that the Book of Acts does give the baptismal formula of the early church. For example, the “The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics” says with respect to baptism in the New Testament...

“The formula used was ‘in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ’ or some synonymous phrase: there is no evidence for the use of the triune name.”

-“The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics,” Art. “Baptism (Early Christian),” ed. James Hastings, New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1951, p. 384.

“The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible” states...

“The evidence of Acts 2:38, 10:48 (cf. 8:16, 19:5), supported by Galatians 3:27, Romans 6:3, suggests that baptism in early Christianity was administered, not in the three-fold name, but ‘in the name of Jesus Christ’ or ‘in the name of the Lord Jesus.’”

-“The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible,” Art. “Baptism,” Nashville: Abingdon, 1962, 1, p. 351.

Some argue that “in the name of Jesus” is not a formula since the various baptismal accounts use different descriptive phrases, such as “in the name of Jesus Christ,” “in the name of the Lord Jesus,” and “in the name of the Lord.” However, all these phrases are equivalent, for they all describe the same name, which is Jesus. “Lord” and “Christ” are simply titles that distinguish the Lord Jesus Christ from any others who might have the name Jesus, but the name of the Son of God is Jesus.

-Conclusion:

Scripture tells us that whatever we do in word or deed should be done in Jesus’ name (Col. 3:17). Baptism is an act of both word and deed. If we do not obey this command in regard to baptism, how do we then apply it at all? We should also note here that we have clearly demonstrated that throughout the New Testament churches, it is always implied that they all have been baptized. Never is it framed as being optional, or that only certain of the Christians at any given location had been baptized. Go ahead and look back at the entire multitude of passages we have examined. They all seem to take as a

given, the idea that all of the believers in any particular church had been baptized!

Furthermore, it is easily demonstrable when looking through the records of church history, that the early church always baptized using the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. A cursory study of this topic will reveal that the formula was changed after the Apostolic period when politics and false doctrine began to overtake the mainstream church.

Historical Evidence Disproving The Trinitarian Baptismal Formula

When we indulge in a study of ancient Christian baptism, we find that two facts begin to emerge:

1. The evidence clearly points to ancient Christian baptism as being “in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ,” rather than the modern Trinitarian formula of the titles “Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.”
2. The evidence clearly points to the modern rendering of Matthew 28:19 as having been inserted by the Catholic Church.

In this section, we will support these two statements by providing documented evidence from the record of history and from the testimony of Christian scholarship that attests to that history. The quotations from these sources, that we will provide, can be summarized in the following evidential points:

- The Catholic Church openly confesses to changing the baptismal formula.
- Most theologians also agree that the Catholic Church did change it.
- The early Christians did not baptize in the Trinitarian formula, but instead, were all baptized in the name of Jesus Christ only, as shown by Scriptural record and the testimony of early church fathers.
- All Scriptures other than Matthew 28:19 say we are baptized and

- saved by the name of the Lord only, with no Trinitarian mention.
- The early church historian Eusebius saw early manuscripts of the Book of Matthew, and when he quoted this verse (Matthew 28:19), he did not use the Trinitarian formula.

As we go through the following quotes, any rational observer should agree that the weight of evidence is overwhelming that the Trinitarian formula was never used in early Christian baptism, and that Matthew 28:19 should read “in My name” rather than the modern rendering using the Trinitarian titles.

Let’s begin by recognizing the testimony of early Christian baptism as being only in Jesus’ name, and not using the Trinitarian formula. We will then see how as time passed, the Trinitarian formula began to be accepted in the mainstream as the church fell farther away from the original truth.

- Eusebius (c. 260-340 A.D.) was an early church historian and Bishop of Caesarea Maritima. Eusebius quotes the early book of Matthew that he had in his library in Caesarea. According to this eyewitness of an early Book of Matthew that could have been the original, or one of the first copies, Eusebius informs us of Jesus’ actual words to His disciples in the original text of Matthew 28:19...

“With one word and voice He said to His disciples: ‘Go, and make disciples of all nations in My Name, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.’”

-Eusebius, “Proof of the Gospel” (Demonstratio Evangelica), ed. and trans. W.J. Ferrar, Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2001, Book III, Ch. 6, 132(a), p. 152.

Notice that Eusebius quotes this early document as saying “in My Name,” rather than “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost”. So, according to this witness of Eusebius, the Trinitarian titles were found nowhere in the early manuscripts of this passage. This is extremely compelling evidence of a later addition of the Trinitarian titles to Matthew 28:19. It is interesting to note that Eusebius, who was present at the Council of Nicea, quoted Verse 19 many times using the phrase “in my name” before the Council, but never afterwards.

-David Bernard, “The New Birth,” Hazelwood, Mo.: Word Aflame Press, 2014, p. 176.

- Even earlier than Eusebius, Hermas, in the 2nd century, wrote of baptism “in the name of the Lord” and in the “name of the Son of God.”

-Hermas, “The Pastor” (The Shepherd), 1.3.7 & 3.9.16, in “The Ante-Nicene Fathers,” II, pp. 15, 49.

We can see in his writings, the pure emphasis on the name of Jesus Christ, instead of any reference to the three-fold titles. He also wrote...

“If you bear His name but possess not His power, it will be in vain that you bear His name.”

-Hermas, 3.9.13, in “The Ante-Nicene Fathers,” II, p. 48.

- The “Didache,” another 2nd century Christian document, speaks of baptism “into the name of the Lord” but also speaks of baptism “into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.”

-“The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles,” 7.1 & 9.5, in “The Ante-Nicene Fathers,” VII, pp. 379, 380.

Some conclude that the “Didache” recognizes both formulas as valid, but we must not overlook the possibility of later interpolations. While scholars have variously dated the original composition of the “Didache” from between 120-200 A.D., the only existing Greek manuscript of it dates to 1056 A.D., leaving ample possibility for later changes (“The Ante-Nicene Fathers,” VII, p. 372). It should be noted that this document teaches various unbiblical practices relative to baptism, but we include it simply because it may be a very early document that also does retain an important reference to the original Jesus name baptismal formula.

- History records a possible reference to Jesus name baptism by a prominent early church father. Shortly after about 150 A.D., Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons, wrote...

“We are made clean, by means of the sacred water and the invocation of the Lord.”

-Irenaeus, “Fragments from the Lost Writings of Irenaeus,” 34, in “The Ante-Nicene Fathers,” I, p. 574.

His last major work however, describes a baptismal formula closer to the Trinitarian, possibly demonstrating how even in his day, it was becoming accepted.

- Closely associated with the baptismal formula is the doctrine of the Godhead. The early post-apostolic fathers, such as Ignatius, Clement of Rome, Polycarp, and Hermas, were

certainly not Trinitarians (Bernard, "The Oneness of God," p. 237). They basically believed in one God and in Jesus as God manifested in flesh. It is hardly surprising then, to find no reference in their writings to a Trinitarian baptismal formula.

- We still find references to Jesus name baptism in historical writings throughout the 3rd and 4th centuries, as the Trinitarian formula began to take hold in the mainstream (Bernard, Ch. 10). The Council of Constantinople in 381 A.D. specifically condemned Sabellian baptism, which it described as prevalent in Galatia (ibid., p. 273). Sabellius was a 3rd century theologian who rejected Trinitarian doctrine in favor of a Modalist (or Oneness) view.

-<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sabellianism> (Retrieved 3/11/18)

- We still find Jesus name baptismal controversies going on throughout the Medieval Period and into the Reformation. These believers were greatly persecuted for their belief in one God and true Biblical Christian baptism, by both the Catholic Church as well as the Protestant Reformers.

(For a deeper exploration of this, see David Bernard's "The New Birth," Ch. 10.)

Let's now begin to examine the testimony of the Catholic Church as well as Protestant Christian scholarship. We will witness their clear admission of the doubtfulness of the validity of the Trinitarian wording in our modern Matthew 28:19, as well as the near unanimous acknowledgment of early Christian baptism being in Jesus name only. This testimony of Catholic and Protestant scholarship is significant, as obviously, Catholics and Protestants are Trinitarian. A testimony is attributed more validity when it goes against the witness's own biases.

So, clearly, if even the top Trinitarian sources outright admit this fact, it should not be difficult at all for the rest of us to recognize. Let's begin to examine these points of evidence...

- The Catholic Church outright admits the early formula was “in Jesus’ name” but was later changed, in the following quote from the Catholic work, “The Jerusalem Bible.” A footnote to Matthew 28:19 says...

“It may be that this formula (the Trinitarian formula), so far as the fullness of its expression is concerned, is a reflection of the liturgical usage established later in the primitive community. It will be remembered that the Acts speak of baptizing ‘in the name of Jesus,’ Acts 1:5 +.”

-“The Jerusalem Bible,” ed. Alexander Jones, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966, p. 64.

Since Catholic belief does not acknowledge the sole authority of Scripture – but instead, also regards Church councils and Church tradition as authoritative – they see no problem with admitting this outright. They readily admit they changed the formula from the pattern described in Scripture and that which was practiced by the earliest Christians. But mainstream Protestant scholars readily admit these facts as well...

- According to the Lutheran scholar Otto Heick...

“At first, baptism was administered in the name of Jesus, but gradually in the name of the Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”

-Heick, 1:53. See also J.F. Bethune-Baker, "An Introduction to the Early History of Christian Doctrine," London: Methuen & Co., 1933, p. 25 n. 1 & p. 378 n. 1.

- In his Bible commentary published in 1919, Dr. Arthur Peake tells us the following regarding the triune wording in Matthew 28:19...

"The command to baptize into the threefold name is a late doctrinal expansion. Instead of the words baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost we should probably read simply-'into My Name.'"

-*"A Commentary on the Bible,"* eds. Arthur S. Peake and A.J. Grieve, London: T.C. and E.C. Jack, 1919, p. 723.

- Professor Stuart G. Hall, the former Chair of Ecclesiastical History at King's College in London, England, makes the following statement affirming that the Trinitarian baptism was not the original form of Christian baptism, but instead was Jesus' name baptism...

"'In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,' although those words were not used, as they later are, as a formula. Not all baptisms fitted this rule."

-Stuart G. Hall, *"Doctrine and Practice in the Early Church,"* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992, pp. 20-21.

Dr. Hall further states...

"More common and perhaps more ancient was the simple, 'In the name of the Lord Jesus or, Jesus Christ.' This practice was known among Marcionites and Orthodox; it is certainly the subject of controversy in Rome and Africa about 254, as the

anonymous tract *De rebaptismate* (“On rebaptism”) shows.”
-*ibid.*

- In the Catholic book “Bible Catechism,” we see the following paragraph...

“Into Christ. The Bible tells us that Christians were baptized into Christ. They belong to Christ. The Acts of the Apostles (2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5) tells us of baptizing ‘in the name (person) of Jesus.’ - a better translation would be ‘into the name (person) of Jesus.’ Only in the 4th Century did the formula ‘In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit’ become customary.”

-John C. Kersten, “Bible Catechism: A Meaning For Man’s Existence,” New Revised-Vatican II Ed., New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1973, p. 164.

- Tom Harpur, former Religion Editor of the Toronto Star, in his “For Christ’s Sake,” states the following...

“All but the most conservative scholars agree that at least the latter part of this command (trine part of Matthew 28:19) was inserted later. The (Trinitarian) formula occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, and we know from the only evidence available (the rest of the New Testament) that the earliest Church did not baptize people using these words (‘in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost’). Baptism was ‘into’ or ‘in’ the name of Jesus alone. Thus it is argued that the verse originally read ‘baptizing them in My Name’ and then was expanded (changed) to work in the (later Catholic Trinitarian) dogma. In fact, the first view put forward

by German critical scholars as well as the Unitarians in the nineteenth century, was stated as the accepted position of mainline scholarship as long ago as 1919, when Peake's commentary was first published: 'The Church of the first days (A.D. 33) did not observe this world-wide (Trinitarian) commandment, even if they knew it. The command to baptize into the threefold (Trinity) name is a late doctrinal expansion.'"

-Tom Harpur, "For Christ's Sake," Toronto: Oxford Univ. Press, 1986, p. 103.

- In a book published in 1879, Baptist scholar Henry Burrage wrote...

"Before his death in 560 A.D. Pope Pelagius said: 'There are many who say that they baptize in the name of Christ alone and by a single immersion.'"

-Henry S. Burrage, "The Act of Baptism in the History of the Christian Church," Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1879, p. 77.

- A journal publication by the Catholic University of America in Washington D.C. admits the following...

"The passages in Acts and the Letters of St. Paul. These passages seem to point to the earliest form as baptism in the name of the Lord."

-Bernard Henry Cuneo, "The Lord's Command To Baptize, An Historical Critical Investigation," in "New Testament Studies," No. V., Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America, 1923, p. 27.

Also, we find...

“Is it possible to reconcile these facts with the belief that Christ commanded his disciples to baptize in the triune form? Had Christ given such a command, it is urged, the Apostolic Church would have followed him, and we should have some trace of this obedience in the New Testament. No such trace can be found. The only explanation of this silence, according to the anti-traditional view, is that the short Christological (Jesus’ name) formula was (the) original, and the longer triune formula was a later development.”

-Ibid.

- Catholic Cardinal and later Pope, Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI), makes this confession as to the origin of the baptismal formula in the Apostle’s Creed...

“The basic form of our profession of faith took shape during the course of the second and third centuries in connection with the ceremony of baptism. So far as its place of origin is concerned, the text came from the city of Rome.”

-Joseph Ratzinger, “Introduction to Christianity,” San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1968, pp. 82-83.

So, even according to Catholic popes, the Trinitarian baptism (“in the name of the Father, Son, Holy Ghost”) and text of Matthew 28:19 therefore did not originate from the original Church that started in Jerusalem around 33 A.D. It was rather as the evidence proves, a later development of Roman Catholicism.

- The historical fact that the baptismal formula was changed to the titles later on is very plainly admitted by German Lutheran theologian and professor Rudolf Bultmann...

“As to the rite of baptism, it was normally consummated as a bath in which the one receiving baptism completely submerged, and if possible in flowing water as the allusions of Acts 8:36, Heb. 10:22, Barn. 11:11 permit us to gather, and as Did. 7:1-3 specifically says... The one baptizing names over the one being baptized the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, later expanded (changed) to the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit.”

-Rudolf Bultmann, “Theology of the New Testament,” trans. Kendrick Grobel, New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1951, p. 133.

- “The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia,” under “Baptism,” says...

“Matthew 28:19 in particular only canonizes a later ecclesiastical situation, that its universalism is contrary to the facts of early Christian history, and its Trinitarian formula (is) foreign to the mouth of Jesus.”

-“The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia,” Vol. IV, Art. “Sacraments,” eds. James Orr, et al., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1939, p. 2637.

- “The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge,” includes an article on baptism, written by Paul Feine, Ph.D., Th.D., a Professor of New Testament Exegesis at the University of Berlin. The article includes this statement regarding the Trinitarian formula in Matthew 28:19...

“Jesus, however, cannot have given His disciples this Trinitarian

order of baptism after His resurrection; for the New Testament knows only one baptism: in the name of Jesus (Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:43; 19:5; Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:3; 1 Cor. 1:13-15), which still occurs even in the second and third centuries, while the Trinitarian formula occurs only in Mt. 28:19, and then only again (in the) Didache 7:1 and Justin, Apol. 1:61... Finally, the distinctly liturgical character of the formula... is strange; it was not the way of Jesus to make such formulas... the formal authenticity of Mt. 28:19 must be disputed..."

-“The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge,” Vol. 1, Art. “Baptism”, Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 1951, pp. 1027-1028.

- “Hasting’s Dictionary of the Bible” states the following...

“The Trinity... is not demonstrable by logic or by Scriptural proofs... The term Trias was first used by Theophilus of Antioch (c. A.D. 180)... (The term Trinity is) not found in Scripture...” “The chief Trinitarian text in the NT is the baptismal formula in Mt. 28:19... This late post-resurrection saying, not found in any other Gospel or anywhere else in the NT, has been viewed by some scholars as an interpolation into Matthew. It has also been pointed out that the idea of making disciples is continued in teaching them, so that the intervening reference to baptism with its Trinitarian formula was perhaps a later insertion into the saying. Finally, Eusebius’s form of the (ancient) text (‘in my name’ rather than in the name of the Trinity) has had certain advocates. (Although the Trinitarian formula is now found in the modern-day book of Matthew), this does not guarantee its source in the historical teaching of Jesus. It is doubtless better to view the (Trinitarian) formula as

derived from early (Catholic) Christian, perhaps Syrian or Palestinian, baptismal usage (cf. *Didache* 7:1-4), and as a brief summary of the (Catholic) Church's teaching about God, Christ, and the Spirit..."

-*"Hastings Dictionary of the Bible,"* ed. James Hastings, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963, p. 88.

It also states...

"Different from the post-apostolic and later Christian liturgical praxis, which is marked by the Trinitarian formula of Matthew 28:19, the primitive Church baptized 'in' or 'into the name of Jesus,' (or 'Jesus Christ,' or 'the Lord Jesus'; see I Cor. 1:13,15; Acts 8:16, 19:5; *Did.* ix. 5)."

-*ibid.*, p. 1015.

- German theologian and New Testament scholar Wilhelm Bousset, in "Kyrios Christos," states the following...

"The testimony for the wide distribution of the simple baptismal formula (in the name of Jesus) down into the second century is so overwhelming that even in Matthew 28:19, the Trinitarian formula was later inserted."

He also says...

"Baptism in the Pauline age was a baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus."

-Wilhelm Bousset, "Kyrios Christos: A History of the Belief in Christ from the Beginnings of Christianity to Irenaeus," 5th ed., trans. John Steely, New York: Abingdon, 1970, pp. 292, 295.

- The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries state...

“It is often affirmed that the words in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost are not the *ipsissima verba* (exact words) of Jesus, but...a later liturgical addition.”

-R.V.G. Tasker, “The Gospel According to St. Matthew,” Vol. I of “The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries,” Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961, p. 275.

- German Lutheran theologian Edmund Schlink, in his book “The Doctrine of Baptism,” admits the following...

“The baptismal command in its Matthew 28:19 form can not be the historical origin of Christian baptism. At the very least, it must be assumed that the text has been transmitted in a form expanded by the (Catholic) church.”

-Edmund Schlink, “The Doctrine of Baptism,” St. Louis: Concordia, 1972, p. 28.

- Jesuit and Roman Catholic Cardinal, Jean Daniélou, writing on the development of Christian doctrine prior to the Council of Nicea, tells us that, “The triune formula and triple immersion” do not come from Jewish Christian practice.

-Jean Daniélou, “The Development of Christian Doctrine Before the Council of Nicea, Vol. I: The Theology of Jewish Christianity,” ed./trans. John A. Baker, London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1964, p. 323.

- “The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics” makes the following statement concerning Matthew 28:19...

“It is the central piece of evidence for the traditional (Trinitarian) view. If it were undisputed, this would, of course,

be decisive, but its trustworthiness is impugned on grounds of textual criticism, literary criticism and historical criticism.”

-“The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics,” Vol. II, Art. “Baptism,” New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1910, p. 380.

It further states that...

“The obvious explanation of the silence of the New Testament on the triune name, and the use of another (Jesus’ name) formula in Acts and Paul, is that this other formula was the earlier, and the triune formula is a later addition.”

-Ibid.

- Church historian and professor Dr. Williston Walker asserts...

“The Trinitarian baptismal formula... was displacing the older baptism in the name of Christ.”

-Williston Walker, “A History of the Christian Church,” New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1947, p. 58.

- “An Encyclopedia of Religions” states...

“Persons were baptized at first ‘in the name of Jesus Christ’... or ‘in the name of the Lord Jesus’... Afterwards, with the development of the doctrine of the Trinity, they were baptized ‘in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.’”

-Maurice A. Canney, “An Encyclopedia of Religions,” London: Routledge, 1921, p. 53.

- “Encyclopedia Bíblica” states...

“It is natural to conclude that baptism was administered in the earliest times ‘in the name of Jesus Christ,’ or in that ‘of the Lord Jesus.’ This view is confirmed by the fact that the earliest forms of the baptismal confession appear to have been single – not triple, as was the later creed.”

-“Encyclopedia Biblica,” Vol. I, Art. “Baptism,” eds. T.K. Cheyne and J. Southerland Black, London: Adam and Charles Black, 1899, p. 473.

- Bible scholar, E.W. Bullinger, in his “Word Studies on the Holy Spirit,” states the following regarding the Trinitarian wording found in the modern text of Matthew 28:19...

“These words are contained in every Greek MS. (manuscript) known, and are, therefore, on documentary evidence, beyond suspicion: but yet there is one great difficulty with regard to them. The difficulty is that the Apostles themselves never obeyed this command; and in the rest of the New Testament there is no hint as to it ever having been obeyed by anyone. Baptism was always in the name of the one person of the Lord Jesus.”

-E.W. Bullinger, “Word Studies on the Holy Spirit,” Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1979, pp. 47-48.

Bullinger also comments...

“It is difficult to suppose that there would have been this universal disregard of so clear a command, if it had ever been given; or (if) it ever really formed part of the primitive text.”

-ibid.

Why are there so few surviving early manuscripts for us to examine the

original phraseology of Matthew 28:19? Much of it is likely due to the fact that in 303 A.D., the Roman emperor Diocletian ordered all the sacred books to be burned. Church historian Eusebius recorded this...

“I saw with mine own eyes the houses of prayer thrown down and razed to their foundations, and the inspired and sacred Scriptures consigned to the fire in the open market place.”

-Eusebius, “The Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius Pamphilus,” trans. Christian Frederic Crusé and Henry de Valois, London: G. Bell and Sons, 1897, Book VIII, Ch. 2.

This has left a large gap of three centuries (a time of great apostasy, which was already starting in Paul’s and Jude’s day – II Thess. 2:7, Jude 1:4), from which there are no known complete Greek MSS – from the 1st century, in which Matthew recorded his Gospel account, until the 4th and 5th centuries. This left plenty of time for perversion of the text to occur.

Oriental Scholar and theologian Frederick Conybeare notes...

“In the only codices which would be even likely to preserve an older reading (a non-triune reading of Mt. 28:19), namely the Sinaitic Syriac and the oldest Latin Manuscript, the pages are gone which contained the end of Matthew.”

-Frederick Conybeare, “The Hibbert Journal,” Oxford, Vol. I. No. 1, Oct., 1902, p. 108.

Is it possible that the destroyed manuscripts and these missing pages might have included a different reading of Matthew 28:19 – an earlier unedited reading that would agree with the rest of the Scripture

concerning baptism, which show baptisms performed in Christ's name alone?

The multitude of aforementioned quotes from Eusebius, church history, and Christian scholarship leave little doubt. We can be sure that the earliest Christian baptisms were "in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ," and not in the Trinitarian titles – just as the New Testament examples record.

So, we continue to clearly see from the witness of church history that the Trinitarian titles were progressively developed over the course of church history, and their application to baptism is nowhere in the earliest accounts. We should be confident in the record of history – that is, that the evolution of the Trinitarian formula should be clearly attributed to Catholic Church councils and the religious traditions of men.

The Biblical Mode Of Baptism: Immersion Or Sprinkling/Pouring?

As Christian doctrine and practice changed over the centuries, many deviant practices were embraced – possibly none more conspicuous than the practice of so-called baptism by sprinkling or pouring, instead of immersion. In the Biblical record, there is never an instance in which anyone is ever baptized by these methods, nor is there any command to do so. Sprinkling is completely contrary to the Biblical mode, which is clearly immersion. The English word “baptism” is transliterated from the Greek word “baptizo” (Strong’s #G907), which literally means, “to immerse” or “to submerge.”

-<https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/baptizo.html> (Retrieved 3/12/18)

By conducting the baptism in any way other than the example set forth in Scripture, we are straying from what is Biblical and embracing instead, the traditions and contrivances of men. Immersion is the only mode of baptism the Bible records. Let’s examine a few descriptive Biblical accounts of baptisms...

- John the Baptist baptized in the Jordan River (Mark 1:5, 9) and “in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there” (John 3:23). He needed springs and rivers large enough for immersion, not just the few drops that water sprinkling would have required.
- John immersed Jesus at His baptism...

“And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water.” –Matthew 3:16

“And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened.” –Mark 1:10

- Philip immersed the Ethiopian eunuch...

“They went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip.”

–Acts 8:38-39

We can see that the Biblical record takes for granted that baptism is done by immersion. And as discussed in earlier sections of our study, Paul described baptism as a burial with Christ (Romans 6:4, Colossians 2:12). These passages presume that baptism is by immersion and only make sense if the reader understands this. No one is buried by sprinkling or pouring a little dirt over the body, but only by complete submergence in the ground. “The Pulpit Commentary” states...

“The reference... is to the form of baptism, viz. (that is to say) by immersion, which was understood to signify burial, and therefore death.”

–“The Pulpit Commentary,” eds. H.D.M. Spence and Joseph Exell, Rpt. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977, Vol. XVIII (Romans), p. 156.

Since the New Testament time, other modes of baptism have arisen, including sprinkling (also called aspersion) and pouring (also called

affusion). However, the Bible itself never describes these methods. Some Old Testament Jewish purification ceremonies involved the sprinkling of water, and some have mistakenly tried to associate this with New Testament baptism. Several verses mention the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, but these verses simply describe Christ's sacrifice in a metaphoric way to connect it with Old Testament blood sacrifices – specifically, the High Priest sprinkling blood onto the Mercy Seat during the feast of Yom Kippur, or Day of Atonement (Hebrews 9:13, 10:22, 11:28, 12:24). These verses do not refer to the mode of baptism, but they do show that the Bible could have used another word for baptism that definitely meant “to sprinkle” rather than “to immerse” if that’s what it intended to convey. Instead, we find the Greek words that indicate “immersion” only when referring to Christian baptism, and the Bible only records baptisms being done by immersion. In terms of its connection with ancient and modern Jewish practice, New Testament Christian baptism is most comparable to a Jewish *mivkah*, or ritual immersion bath.

As indicated in the sources to follow, baptism was eventually changed from its original form and came to involve having a little water sprinkled or poured on one’s head. Historically, sprinkling and pouring arose as a matter of convenience. Immersion became especially inconvenient after the emergence of three nonbiblical baptismal practices...

1. Infant baptism
2. Triple baptism by some Trinitarians

3. Postponement of baptism until the deathbed (in an attempt to live one's whole life in sin and still be saved)

The Catholics will readily admit that the Biblical and early apostolic mode of baptism was by immersion rather than sprinkling, or any other contrived method. In fact, towards the end of the following quote from "A Catholic Dictionary," they admit that their contrived, alternative forms of baptism are not based upon Scripture, but rather "tradition" (which they equally venerate).

"The Scripture makes it clear enough that water is to be used, but it is not so plain at first sight that the sprinkling or pouring of water will suffice. In Apostolic times the body of the baptized person was immersed, for St. Paul looks on this immersion as typifying burial with Christ, and speaks of baptism as a bath (Rom. 6:4, Eph. 5:26)...even St. Thomas, in the 13th century speaks of baptism by immersion as the common practice of his time. Still, the rubric of the Roman Ritual, which states that baptism can be validly given by immersion, infusion, or aspersion, is fully justified by tradition."

-W.E. Addis and T. Arnold, "A Catholic Dictionary," London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1884, Art. "Baptism," p. 60.

The following excerpt from another Catholic source admits not only that early baptisms were done by immersion, but also that the Catholic practices of alternative baptismal methods were brought about simply due to convenience – and not Scriptural example or command...

"Baptism may be validly administered in either of three ways, viz. (that is to say): by immersion... by effusion (pouring) ...and by aspersion

(sprinkling)... For several centuries after the establishment of Christianity, Baptism was usually conferred by immersion, but since the twelfth century, the practice of baptizing by infusion has prevailed in the Catholic Church, as this manner is attended with less inconvenience than baptism by immersion.”

-James Gibbons, “The Faith of Our Fathers,” 110th ed., New York: P.J. Kenedy & Sons, 1826, p. 228.

Church historians overwhelmingly agree that the early post-apostolic church practiced immersion. Ernest Heinrich Klotsche says...

“The practice of immersion was undoubtedly universal in the early church.”

-E.H. Klotsche, “The History of Christian Doctrine,” rev. ed., Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979, p. 100.

Kenneth Scott Latourette affirms this view...

“Baptism seems to have been by immersion, at least normally.”

-Kenneth Scott Latourette, “A History of Christianity,” Vol. I, New York: Harper & Row, 1953, p. 193.

Some historians assert that other modes were occasionally practiced in these early times, but they agree that immersion was the predominant and preferred mode even when others began to develop.

-Bernard, “The New Birth,” p. 262.

The early Christian sources also agree on immersion as the mode of baptism in the early church. Hermas (early 2nd century) described

baptism by immersion and Irenaeus (died 202 A.D.?) denounced baptism by pouring.

-Henry Morris III, "Baptism: How Important Is It?" Denver: Accent Books, 1978, p. 24.

Tertullian (died 220 A.D.?) taught baptism by immersion and disapproved of infant baptism. Cyprian (died 258 A.D.?) is the earliest apologist for sprinkling that we know of, but even he considered immersion to be the normal practice. He described baptism as a dipping but advised sprinkling for the sick. The "Didache" teaches baptism by immersion, but permits pouring if much water is not available. The so-called "Constitutions of the Holy Apostles" (2nd or 3rd century), which contains a parallel passage to this portion of the "Didache," teaches immersion but does not mention pouring.

-Bernard, pp. 262-263.

So, it is clear to us from the Greek word for baptism, the testimony of history, and the outright admission of the Catholic Church, that immersion was the original baptismal mode described in Scripture and practiced by the earliest Christians. Other deviant modes of baptism developed in the centuries following the New Testament time as the mainstream church began to fall away from sound doctrine and began to morph into what we know today as Roman Catholicism.

Is Infant Baptism Scriptural?

Let's now discuss another deviant baptismal practice that developed as the mainstream church began to corrupt itself – infant baptism. Occasional baptisms of infants probably began in the late 2nd century, but it did not gain wide acceptance until the time of Augustine (354-430 A.D.). Augustine took the position that infants inherit the sin of Adam and Eve, and therefore are born sinners and should be baptized soon after their birth. The opposing view, championed by Pelagius (c. 354-418 A.D.), claimed infants are born with a sin nature, but without sin, and become sinners when they are able to understand right and wrong and choose wrong. At that point, they should be baptized. Unfortunately, Augustine convinced the bulk of the church to accept his view.

-<https://www.monergism.com/pelagianism-vs-augustinianism-church-history> (Retrieved 3/15/18)

The plain truth is that we have no Scriptural basis or instruction for performing infant baptism. In fact, the notion of infant baptism completely undermines the entire purpose of baptism. The privilege of being baptized was to be given only to those who believed in Christ, repented of his/her sins, and orally confessed that he/she believed Jesus to be the Son of God (Mark 16:15-16, Acts 2:38, Romans 10:8-10). Here is the simple, main point that all who advocate infant baptism are missing: saving faith is a conscious, voluntary, free-will response to God. Infants can neither believe, nor repent, and they are not even close to an age where they can understand any of this.

As we can see in the following passage, Philip indicates that baptism is for the conscious believer who recognizes their sin and understands who Jesus is...

“And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?

And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”

–Acts 8:36-39

Philip elicited a confession of faith before baptizing the Ethiopian eunuch. An infant is obviously not yet able to do any of this. What we do see is that those who understand their sin are pricked in their hearts and repent, and are then baptized in order to wash their sins away. The new birth is a change of life based upon an understanding of previous wrongdoing. Infants are not yet mentally capable of understanding any of this, but more importantly, have not yet even sinned. They are not yet at an age at which they can understand sin and be accountable to change.

Infant baptism ignores the purpose of salvation and baptism in that it leaves out the most important aspect, free will. God never forces anyone to repent or be baptized. He commands and encourages all to do so, as it is a necessary part of the plan that He so graciously made available, but He forces no one. He is looking for lovers, rather than slaves or robots. What would it prove for an Almighty God to force His creation into doing His bidding? That idea ignores the entire

purpose of our creation, which was to enact free will choices to enter into a love relationship with our Creator.

Catholic sources, such as the following quote by Cardinal Newman, readily admit that infant baptisms are found nowhere in Scripture...

“It is but fair and right to acknowledge at once that Scripture does not bid us baptize children.”

-John Henry Newman, “Parochial and Plain Sermons,” Vol. VII, London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1908, p. 219.

Author John Cunningham records how the historical practices of the church brought about the emergence of infant baptism...

“Change leads to change. Immersion was the only mode of baptism in the Apostolic Church. No other would have been understood. But when baptism no longer immediately followed conversion, when it was frequently deferred till death was near, immersion in such a case was impossible. When infant baptism became common the necessity for some relaxation of the rule became still more pressing. You could not take a dying man from his bed, nor a sickly child from his mother’s lap and plunge it in cold water... Here was the first beginning of what were afterwards called clinical baptisms – baptisms accommodated to the babe of a day old, to the sick and the dying.”

-John Cunningham, “The Growth of the Church in its Organizations and Institutions,” London: MacMillan and Co., 1886, pp. 190, 191.

So, we can clearly conclude that the practice of infant baptism is both unscriptural and a later development of church tradition.

Is Baptismal Regeneration Biblical?

Let's discuss yet another deviant belief regarding baptism – baptismal regeneration. This is the belief that the ceremony of baptism itself has saving power. We must emphasize that the Bible does not teach this concept regarding baptism. The water and the ceremony do not have saving power in themselves. Water baptism is not a magical act; it is without spiritual value unless accompanied by conscious faith and repentance.

Furthermore, baptism – as essential as it is – is only one aspect of the New Birth/Gospel Plan of Salvation taught in Scripture. And as we have mentioned earlier in this study, it is not the water or the ceremony that remits or “washes away” sin, but rather the power is in name of Jesus being invoked in conjunction with a willing believer's obedience to the Scriptural method of baptism.

Baptism is important only because God has ordained it so be so. God could have chosen to remit sin without baptism, but in the New Testament church He has chosen to do so at the moment of baptism. Our actions at baptism do not provide salvation or earn it from God; God alone remits sins based on Christ's atoning death. Rather, when we submit to water baptism according to God's plan and command, God honors our obedient faith and remits our sin.

Resurrection: The Holy Ghost

As we enter the last component of study that answers the question of “How do I obey the gospel,” let’s quickly reflect on what we have learned thus far. We have seen so far from Scripture, that in accordance with the Scriptural commands to “obey the gospel” (which Paul defines as the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus), the early Christian converts repented and were baptized by immersion in the name of Jesus Christ. We have discussed how repentance represents death, and baptism represents burial. Let’s now begin to explore the final part of the gospel plan – the Holy Ghost, which represents resurrection. Let’s first become familiar with the background, so that we can realize the significance of what happened when the Holy Ghost was poured out on the birthday of the New Testament church, which was the Day of Pentecost.

The baptism or outpouring of the Holy Ghost is the basis of the New Covenant spoken of in the Old Testament by a number of the prophets, including Joel, Ezekiel, Jeremiah and Isaiah. A covenant is a pact or agreement between two or more parties, in this case, God and man.

The Old Covenant (made at Mt. Sinai after God lead Israel as a nation out of slavery in Egypt) involved the instructions given to all of Israel and their failure to live up to what they had promised to do. Israel had been instructed by God’s servants and had witnessed numerous divine miracles from God. However, without His Holy Spirit leading and guiding them from within, they ultimately could not obey God, much less overcome weaknesses of the flesh. Their experience

demonstrates that man cannot obey or please God with his natural carnal mind. The prophets predicted a New Covenant between God and man - a new basis of relationship. The fact that a New Covenant would be made implies two things about the covenant made at Sinai:

- The Old Covenant was temporary, serving a temporary purpose.
- The Old Covenant was not complete for God's ultimate plan and purpose.

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul nicely sums up the purpose for the Old Covenant law and its relationship to the New Covenant...

“Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.”

-Galatians 3:24-25

The New Covenant was to be the completion of which the covenant made at Sinai pointed towards. It is the fulfillment of what the law acted as a “schoolmaster” toward. The following passage from Romans tells us that what was impossible to accomplish through the law (because it depended upon our own humanity to live up to), will be fulfilled and accomplished through the Holy Spirit living inside of us, enabling us to walk after the Spirit...

“For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin,

condemned sin in the flesh:

That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

–Romans 8:3-4

What the nation of Israel was not able to do through the Old Covenant would become possible to believers who take part in the New Covenant, established through the blood shed by Jesus Christ on the cross. This, Jesus referred to at the Last Supper prior to His crucifixion...

“Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament (covenant) in my blood, which is shed for you.”

–Luke 22:20

The author of Hebrews goes to great lengths to expound upon the details regarding the New Covenant...

“But now hath he (Jesus) obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.

For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.

For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a New Covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:”

–Hebrews 8:6-8

*It is recommended to study the Book of Hebrews in order to better understand the relationship between the Old and New Covenants.

Paul writes to the Corinthian church, stating how the Old Covenant letter of the law was unable to bring life. However, through the New Covenant, the Spírit will give life...

“Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spírit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.

And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward:

Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;

Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament (covenant); not of the letter, but of the spírit: for the letter killeth, but the spírit giveth life.”

-2 Corinthians 3:3-6

So, it is clear that the New Covenant, made possible through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, would be empowered through the Spírit. Prophecy of this New Covenant outpouring of the Spírit baptism is recorded in the Old Testament...

“And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out my Spírit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions.

And also on my menservants and on my maidservants I will pour out my Spírit in those days.” -Joel 2:28-29

It is important to recognize the distinction between the Old and New Covenants. You may ask, “When did the Old Covenant cease and the New Covenant begin?” The Bible declares that the Old Covenant under the law and the prophets ended with John the Baptist, who declared the coming of Jesus Christ, preached repentance, and paved the way for Christ’s earthly ministry.

“The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John. Since that time, the good news of the kingdom of God is being preached, and everyone is forcing their way into it.”

–Luke 16:16 (NIV)

In the next passage we will look at, Jesus acknowledges John the Baptist as being the greatest of all the Old Covenant prophets. Furthermore, Jesus creates an interesting distinction between the Old Covenant and the New with the following statement...

“Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.”

–Matthew 11:11

How can this be, that the least in this New Covenant age Jesus is introducing is considered greater than John the Baptist, who Jesus declared was greater than Moses, Samuel, David, Elijah, and all of the Old Covenant prophets and leaders? The answer is simple, and illustrates the uniqueness of this New Covenant Jesus was introducing: Although the Spirit of the Lord greatly empowered those men to perform great feats, they did not possess the indwelling

Holy Spirit the way that we now can after it was poured out at the Day of Pentecost. This astonishing fact makes clear the distinction and uniqueness of the entity called the church – the first to receive this New Covenant Jesus was anticipating! This is further stated in Hebrews...

“And these all (prominent OT figures), having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.” –Hebrews 11:39-40

Everyone who participates in God’s New Covenant today, which is accomplished through His indwelling Spirit, has greater spiritual privileges, blessings, and power than John – or any of the Old Testament figures – had. John preached that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, and called for the people to repent. However, he did not participate in the spiritual fullness of that kingdom (the outpouring of the Spirit), for the fullness of grace came only through Christ (John 1:16-17, meaning His death, burial and resurrection, which lead to the Spirit at Pentecost). John was murdered prior to all this. John the Baptist did not have the baptism of the Holy Ghost, but he preached that Jesus, who would come after him, would baptize with the Holy Ghost...

“And (John the Baptist) preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me (Jesus Christ), the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.” –Mark 1:7-8

Jesus did not found the New Testament church or give believers the Holy Ghost during His earthly ministry, but spoke of the church in the future tense...

“...upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” –Matthew 16:18b

Shortly before His ascension, He told the disciples the following...

“Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures,
And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:
And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”
–Luke 24:45-47

He then told them to wait in Jerusalem until they received the promise
– the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

“And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.”
–Luke 24:49

“And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me.
For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the

Holy Ghost not many days hence.

When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?

And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”

–Acts 1:4-8

The New Testament church dates from the Day of Pentecost, rather than from John’s preaching or the Lord’s earthly ministry. God had designed a New Covenant with man, and this covenant required Christ’s death, burial and resurrection before it would come into effect. This New Covenant (or testament) includes the promise of the Holy Spirit (Jeremiah 31:31-33; 2 Corinthians 3:3-6).

Before the New Covenant could be initiated, Jesus had to die...

“And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament (covenant), that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.” –Hebrews 9:15-16

In other words, when a man writes a will, the ones labeled as the beneficiaries of the will do not receive anything until after the man dies. Therefore, Jesus had to die in order that we might receive His

promise. Jesus became the mediator of the New Covenant by His death, and His resurrection made the death effective...

“but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness – for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.” –Romans 4:24-25 (NIV)

Therefore, the promised Holy Spirit could only be given after Christ’s death and resurrection...

“(But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)” –John 7:39

“Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.” –John 16:7

The New Testament church began on the Hebrew feast day called Pentecost, which was about fifty days after Christ’s death on the Passover. We will now continue with Jesus’ command (given in Acts 1:4-8) to tarry in Jerusalem until the Holy Ghost was given!

In obedience to Christ’s command, approximately one hundred twenty of His followers returned to Jerusalem after His ascension to await the baptism of the Spirit. Included in this number were the twelve Apostles (with Matthias replacing Judas Iscariot), Mary the

mother of Jesus, the brothers of Jesus, and a number of women (Acts 1).

They were gathered together in an “upper room,” on the Jewish feast day of Pentecost. Acts 2 then states that while these one hundred twenty believers were together in this upper room awaiting the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, the following then took place...

“And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

-Acts 2:2-4

When the Holy Ghost entered into the one hundred twenty believers, they began to praise God in languages (tongues) that were unknown to the speakers. The noise of this event caused Jews, who had traveled to Jerusalem from numerous foreign countries and were staying in the city during the feast days, to become astounded at what they were seeing and hearing! Many of the tongues being spoken by the one hundred twenty turned out to be foreign languages that were recognized by these foreign Jewish onlookers as being their native tongues! They marveled at this and were astonished, and inquired what this was all about!

“And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this?”

Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.
But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words:
For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day.
But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel;
And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:
And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:
And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” –Acts 2:12-18, 21

In response to the astonishment of the Jews, Peter stood up and declared this to be the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy of the New Covenant Spirit outpouring from Joel 2:28-32 (“And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh...”). Peter then went on to preach to the crowd of Jews that were gathered, about Jesus...

“Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because

it was not possible that he should be holden of it.
For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before
my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved:
Therefore did my heart rejoyce, and my tongue was glad; moreover
also my flesh shall rest in hope:
Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer
thine Holy One to see corruption.
Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full
of joy with thy countenance.
Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch
David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us
unto this day.
Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an
oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he
would raise up Christ to sit on his throne;
He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his
soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.
This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.
Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having
received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed
forth this, which ye now see and hear.
For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The
Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand,
Until I make thy foes thy footstool.
Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath
made the same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.”
—Acts 2:22-36

Acts records that when the people heard this, they were grieved and understood what he preached to them, knowing they had supported the crucifixion of their Messiah!

“Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?” –Acts 2:37

Let us understand that fundamentally, this is the same question we should all be asking at some point in our lives upon realizing we are all sinners in need of redemption. Graciously, the Lord has devised an incredible plan, designed to redeem us back to Him! This plan, made possible through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, was made known to all who were present here at the beginning of the New Testament church – at the very first sermon! So, in response to the question “what shall we do,” Peter answered by telling them the following...

“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.”

–Acts 2:38-40

If it wasn't obvious enough given the setting, Verse 40 makes it even clearer that the context of Peter's command was salvation ("save yourself"). We will see this even more clearly in the verses that follow.

As we will see in the following excerpts, the crowd was receptive to Peter's command (which Jesus' Great Commission authorized him to declare), and about three thousand obeyed and were added to the church.

"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them (the 120 that had already experienced this) about three thousand souls.

And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

–Acts 2:41-42, 47b

So, it is obvious and clear that about three thousand souls were saved that day (in addition to the original one hundred twenty), through obedience to Peter's command in Acts 2:38 (repentance, baptism, receiving the Holy Ghost).

We can also understand from the above passages that Scripture identifies those who had obeyed the Acts 2:38 salvation message as "the church" ("...and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."). There should be no confusion as to the clear identification of the salvation pattern practiced in the Apostolic church.

There should also be no confusion as to what initiates you into the church. Clearly, it is obedience to the Acts 2:38 command that inducts one into God's church. This was the salvation command given on the birthday of the church, and we should expect no alternative message for us today. We are required to obey the same salvation message that was preached to the church at the beginning.

So, this is then our foundational Scripture for understanding the gospel plan of salvation, as applied by the Apostles on the birthday of the New Testament church. Notice that the Apostles never commanded new converts to "accept/receive Jesus as their personal Savior," or to "repeat a sinner's prayer." We find no Scriptural instruction for such religious inventions that are commonly promoted in many modern churches. The Bible contains no salvation command to "accept Jesus."

The only way to "receive Jesus" is by receiving His Spirit – the Holy Ghost, or Spirit of Christ (Rom. 8:9), which Scripture indicates does not automatically happen when one simply prays a prayer with the intention of "accepting Jesus." Further ahead in our study, we will highlight this reality from the recorded accounts in Acts, which clearly exclude the possibility that anything similar to "accepting Jesus" is equivalent with the Spirit endowment experience.

The same Acts 2:38 salvation message continued to be preached and practiced by the New Testament church, according to Scripture – and as mentioned, we today have no Biblical instruction that retracts or alters this command.

The Significance Of Acts: The Biblical Record Of The Early Church

It is important to recognize the significance of Acts with regards to having the proper understanding of the New Testament message of salvation. Frequently, those who misunderstand Scripture with regards to salvation, habitually ignore the Book of Acts and instead look to the epistles to find a basic salvation command. But the epistles are letters written to already established churches with already saved Christians. We should not expect to find full salvation commands being given to those who already obeyed the plan of salvation! Instead, we should look to the historical record of the birth of the church to see how salvation was preached and practiced at the beginning.

When looking at the New Testament, it is imperative to understand the four divisions that comprise it:

- The Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John)
- Church History (Acts)
- The Epistles (Romans to Jude + Letters to the 7 Churches in Revelation)
- Prophecy (Revelation)

-The Gospels are historical accounts of the birth, life, teachings, ministry, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. None of them describes the establishing of a church; they describe the One upon whom the church would later be established (Jesus Christ).

-The Book of Acts is a narrative history of the New Testament church, describing its beginning in Jerusalem, and its spread to all Judea, Samaria and the Gentile world.

-The Epistles are letters of instruction and admonition written to born again believers to help them become effective in Christian living. While the epistles do contain references to the initial conversion experience, they assume the readers to which the epistles were written had already completed it. In other words, the epistles may expound on the salvation experience, but we should not expect to find salvation commands being given to those who had already been saved.

-The Book of Revelation is also addressed to established churches and believers, revealing God's plan for the future.

So then, the bottom line here is that Acts is the only book in the Bible to contain historical accounts of people receiving the new birth experience in the New Testament church, including all accounts of water baptism and Spirit baptism. Because of the nature and purpose of the book, it contains most of the direct evidence relative to the question, "How can I be saved?" In other words, Acts provides us with a direct look into how Christian essentials were preached and experienced right at the beginning of the church – before it had time to corrupt itself. We can observe these inspired instructions straight from the mouths of the apostles themselves – including critical issues such as the salvation message, water baptism, and receiving the Spirit.

The Book of Acts is the pattern and norm for the New Testament church, not the exception! If Acts is not the norm, then the Bible gives us no historical example of what the conversion experience should be like. For example, the five detailed accounts of the Spirit baptism in Acts are not exhaustive, but are representative of the way in which God poured out His Spirit across the entire spectrum of humanity. In order to obtain further evidence of the Biblical representation of receiving the Holy Ghost, we will examine these five accounts individually in the following section of our study.

The Biblical Accounts Of New Converts Receiving The Holy Ghost

In this section, we will closely examine all of the detailed accounts in which new converts are recorded receiving the Holy Ghost in the early church. An analysis and comparison of these accounts will help substantiate or refute the claims that get made regarding this experience of receiving the Holy Ghost. Although there are several other places in Acts where new converts are mentioned being saved, we will primarily focus on the five recorded accounts that provide us sufficient detail for examination. Let's begin...

-The Day of Pentecost:

Though we have already examined this account quite thoroughly in previous sections, we must recognize several significant points regarding this baseline event. It is critical to realize that from the Biblical record, the Holy Ghost outpouring was not just for the apostles. Consider the following points...

- All the one hundred twenty went to the upper room to await the fulfillment of the promise. All one hundred twenty received the Spirit.
- In Joel's prophecy, which Peter applied to Pentecost, God said He would pour out His Spirit on all flesh, including sons, daughters, young men, old men, servants, and handmaidens (Acts 2:16-18).
- After Peter gave the salvation command in Verse 38, he said in Verse 39 that this promise is "unto you, and to your children,

and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” So, clearly, this is for all people for all generations, which we will clearly find out when we continue to read Acts.

- Furthermore, we can assume that an additional three thousand received the Spirit in response to Peter’s sermon, as shown by the following observations from the Acts account...

-Peter promised the gift of the Holy Ghost to all who heard his word (Acts 2:38-39), and three thousand received his word gladly (Acts 2:41).

-The three thousand believed his message and applied it to their lives after Peter had preached that the gift of the Holy Ghost was available to them.

-The three thousand were baptized (Acts 2:41). Even if this means water baptism alone, the Spirit was promised to all those who would repent and be baptized in water (Acts 2:38).

-The three thousand were “added unto them,” namely to the one hundred twenty who had just received the Spirit (who Verse 47 then calls “the church”). We safely conclude that about three thousand one hundred twenty received the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost.

-The company later comes together to pray, and Acts records them as being “all filled with the Holy Ghost” (Acts 4:31).

It is important to point out that, according to Acts 2:4, all who received the Holy Ghost experienced the same initial sign or evidence...

“And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

–Acts 2:4

Some try to assert that God performed this miracle of tongues so the foreigners could hear the gospel preached to them, but this idea is soundly refuted in that Peter a short time later delivered a sermon to them in one common language. This was either Aramaic, the native language of all Jews at that time, or Greek, the international language of commerce at that time. At any rate, the explanation that the miracle of tongues was used to preach the gospel is clearly not the case. This is also refuted in the recurring instances of other believers also speaking in tongues when receiving the Holy Ghost, depicted in subsequent Acts accounts, with these examples absent of foreigners.

Instead, God used tongues as a miraculous sign to evidence to them that He had bestowed His Spirit. Peter used their questions and comments about tongues to open his sermon, and he immediately told them that this was the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy concerning the outpouring of the Spirit (Acts 2:14-21). Later in his sermon, Peter said...

“Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.” –Acts 2:33 (NIV)

The audience had just seen and heard people speaking in tongues, so Peter emphasized it as the initial outward sign of the promised Holy Ghost!

So, if the Holy Ghost outpouring on the Day of Pentecost recorded in Acts 2 serves as a model for us, it is then clear that speaking in other tongues appears to be the initial sign of one receiving the Holy Ghost. We will examine the Biblical record of subsequent outpourings in order to verify if this sign remained a constant, thereby still being relevant to us today. In a later section, we will also examine certain passages that clearly imply tongues as being the sign of the Spirit endowment. In conclusion, the Day of Pentecost represents the first occurrence of the baptism of the Holy Ghost, specifically, the first outpouring on the Jews.

***At this time, we need to stop and address two points regarding tongues that have confused many Christians in denominational churches...

Note #1: Tongues in and of themselves do not save. Instead, the relationship between the Spirit baptism and tongues appears similar to that of faith and works. We are saved by faith, not works, yet works always accompany genuine faith. Likewise, tongues do not save us, yet the Spirit baptism always produces tongues as the initial sign.

Do tongues always accompany the baptism of the Spirit? The Book of Acts indicates this to be so, which we will thoroughly explore in this section and later sections of our study; it describes tongues and

nothing else as the consistent initial sign associated with the individual filling. A Spirit baptism without tongues is a nonbiblical concept; the Bible does not discuss this possibility. We should always expect speaking in tongues when someone receives the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

Note #2: In denominational churches, it is extremely common to hear the objection that tongues are not a sign of Spirit infilling because of a passage in 1 Corinthians that implies that not all speak in tongues. This reveals a fundamental misunderstanding of Paul's context – and understandably so, in a generation where the mainstream church has not experienced a Spirit outpouring.

This common misunderstanding regarding tongues involves confusion between tongues manifested as the initial sign of the baptism of the Spirit and tongues manifested as the Gift of Tongues (one of the 9 Gifts of the Spirit). This is a critical distinction that we need to recognize, or we will surely come to the wrong conclusion on this topic. So, let's touch upon this subject in order to eliminate confusion and explain this common objection.

Paul's rhetorical question in 1 Corinthians 12:30, "do all speak with tongues?" (to which the implied answer is "no"), is the source of this misunderstanding regarding tongues in modern Christendom. Because of a misunderstanding of the context of this passage, many have misinterpreted it and concluded that Paul is saying that not every Spirit filled believer will speak in tongues. But there is also a mental motivation behind this common misinterpretation. Because the outpouring of the Holy Ghost is not commonly experienced in most

Christian churches, and most denominational Christians are then unfamiliar with tongues, it becomes easy for them to assume that tongues are a secondary gift that not every Christian will experience. In other words, because they have not experienced tongues themselves, nor witnessed it in their church, and because their church doctrine states that they are saved after praying a sinner's prayer, they must conclude that tongues are not an essential sign. When they then see this passage in 1 Corinthians, their confirmation bias kicks in, and they dismiss all of the evidence to the contrary that we see in Acts and elsewhere. That is why this objection to tongues is so universal in the mainstream church.

However, this 1 Corinthians passage must not be isolated from the rest of the New Testament, and it must be understood within context. The context in this chapter is very specific! Paul's rhetorical question is found within the context of his instruction about the nine spiritual gifts, of which, one is the Gift of Tongues. So then, what did Paul mean?

There are nine individual Gifts of the Spirit, given for the purpose of the corporate edification of the church body.



Not every member of the church has necessarily been given all nine of the gifts, hence Paul's rhetorical question. Not everyone has the Gift of Tongues.

But the Gifts of the Spirit are available only to those who have already received the baptism of the Spirit. Paul's instruction regarding these Gifts is within the context of already-saved Christians. So, we are not talking about initial Spirit-filling here. Paul was writing to already-established Christian churches made up of people who had already been saved. Here's the bottom line...

It is critical to recognize that there is a difference between the baptism of the Holy Ghost as initially evidenced by speaking in other tongues - and the Gift of Tongues. These are two distinct tongues manifestations, and Paul is not talking about receiving the Spirit in this passage - he is talking about the Gift of Tongues, which is a secondary manifestation that not all Christians experience. Let's examine these two Biblical tongues manifestations in order to further sharpen our understanding of the functional distinctions...

- The former is standard to all believers who have received the Spirit, and has the purpose of personal edification and a special prayer language with the Lord (1 Cor. 14:4). The individual speaking in this manifestation of tongues does not understand the exact meaning of the tongues and is not supposed to (1 Cor. 14:2).
- The latter is distributed by God to individuals according to His will, and is intended for corporate edification of the church

body, to be accompanied by the Gift of Interpretation (1 Cor. 14:5 and 13-14). Because it is for the purpose of getting a divine message to the congregation, it is intended to be understood. For this reason, Paul instructs the church that this gift should only be performed along with the interpretation (1 Cor. 14:27-28). Otherwise, it is ineffective and confusing.

If you do not recognize the clear Scriptural distinction between the two, you will arrive at the wrong conclusion regarding tongues. It is helpful to recognize the way Paul contrasts these two tongues demonstrations in his dissertation. Let's examine several distinctions we can observe in this passage, and in the New Testament as a whole...

- Paul makes it clear in this passage that Holy Ghost tongues is a personal prayer language not expected to be understood, while the Gift of Tongues is always intended to be understood through the Gift of Interpretation.
- He also makes it clear that Holy Ghost tongues is intended for personal edification, while the Gift of Tongues is intended for corporate edification of the church body (which is why it is intended to be understood and exercised only with an interpretation).
- Additionally, he makes it clear that Holy Ghost tongues is a personal prayer language in which the Spirit prays through the individual during communication with God, while the Gift of

Tongues is expressly God using the individual as a means to get a discernable message to the congregation as a whole.

- And finally, the Book of Acts makes it clear from the five accounts of individuals receiving the Holy Ghost, that all who do, experience tongues. Meanwhile, it is obvious from both Scripture and real-life observation that not every saved Christian individual is given all nine Gifts of the Spirit, but rather God distributes them according to His will (hence Paul's rhetorical question).

You may find this chart to be helpful...

<u>Understanding the Distinctions Between the Two Tongues Manifestations</u>	
"Holy Ghost Tongues"	Gift of Tongues
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Personal Edification• Not intended to be understood by speaker or those nearby• Has no connection to Gift of Interpretation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Corporate Edification• Intended to be understood by congregation• To be exercised along with Gift of Interpretation

Furthermore, some people also have confusion regarding how these manifestations are to be used in public worship settings. Some have been critical of congregational worship where each person is praying aloud, with many speaking in tongues simultaneously. There is nothing wrong with this, since it is Holy Ghost tongues being used in

personal prayer and edification – not the Gift of Tongues. This is also completely Biblical, as we see that this same type of congregational prayer in tongues was practiced routinely by the early church, as demonstrated repeatedly through Acts.

To the contrary, when the Gift of Tongues is being exercised in a congregational setting, what will typically happen is a hush come over the crowd and God will then begin to speak through one person, giving a message in tongues for all to hear. Shortly after the person stops speaking, either that same person or another person will typically give the interpretation by the Spirit, for all to hear. When this is finished, the congregation will normally then resume corporate prayer and consider the message God had spoken.

So, when one is used to witnessing or experiencing these tongues manifestations (like the early church was) it is easy to recognize the simple distinctions of both demonstration and function. However, as with anything that involves man, the Gifts of the Spirit can be misused or abused. This seems to be the motivation for Paul's instruction on the spiritual gifts to the church at Corinth.

With that said, let's now continue our exploration of the remaining four instances in Acts, which document early converts receiving the Holy Ghost.

-Samaria:

The second recorded Spirit baptism occurred in Samaria. Racially and religiously, the Samaritans were a mixture of Jew and Gentile and thus constituted a class of people uniquely distinct from either.

Acts 8:6-16 tells us that Philip the Evangelist took the gospel to Samaria. The Samaritans listened to him, saw miracles (including healing and casting out of evil spirits), had great joy, believed his message, and were baptized in water in the name of Jesus. Yet, we are told that they had not received the Holy Ghost! This incident clearly reveals that the baptism of the Spirit is a distinct experience not to be confused with mental believing, repentance, or water baptism.

When the Apostles heard what was happening in Samaria, they sent Peter and John. When Peter and John prayed for the Samaritans and laid hands on them, they received the Holy Ghost (Acts 8:17).

Note: This story does not teach that one of the twelve Apostles had to bestow the Holy Ghost, for Paul was filled with the Spirit when Ananias (who was not an apostle) prayed for him (Acts 9). Similarly, the laying on of hands is not an absolute requirement, for the one hundred twenty received the Holy Ghost without this act (Acts 2), as did Cornelius and his household (Acts 10).

In reference to tongues, it is clear that when the Samaritans received the Holy Ghost, there was a prominent outward sign put on display, for Simon the Samaritan sorcerer was so impressed that he offered the Apostles money that he might also be able to “give” people the Spirit! We will discuss this more later on, in the section entitled [Further](#)

Evidence That Tongues Is The Initial Sign Of The Spirit Baptism, found on page 422. But for now, let's take a look at this passage...

“Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.

And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.” –Acts 8:17-19

So, we see from Acts 8 that the Samaritans, a mixed race of Jew and Gentile, also received the Holy Ghost, and exhibited a prominent outward sign, though in this case that sign is not clearly specified. We also clearly see that this story demonstrates that one does not receive the Spirit automatically when first mentally believing in Jesus. To the contrary, we see that the Spirit infilling is a distinct experience with a unique and prominent outward sign.

-Paul's Conversion:

Saul of Tarsus (later renamed Paul – the writer of most of the New Testament epistles), was stopped and blinded by a light from heaven on his way to persecute the saints at Damascus. However, we find no indication that he was saved at this moment. Rather, the Lord told him...

“Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.” –Acts 9:6b

God sent Paul to Ananias in order for Paul to have his sight restored and receive the Holy Ghost...

“And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.”

–Acts 9:17

The next verse then says...

“And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.”

–Acts 9:18

Even if the word “baptized” in Verse 18 only refers to water baptism, we can safely believe he also received the Holy Ghost at this time. Although the Bible does not specifically describe Paul’s Spirit baptism experience individually, we must understand from the previous verse that the Lord’s stated purpose of Paul being filled with the Holy Ghost must have been accomplished. Paul’s later writings and ministry clearly confirmed that he indeed had received the Holy Ghost.

In regard to tongues, we understand that Paul did speak in tongues as evidenced by the references to his speaking in tongues personally in his epistle to the Corinthian church...

“I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all:”

-1 Corinthians 14:18

This passage implies that speaking in tongues is beneficial, and the phrase “I speak” implies that tongues are to be continually experienced on an ongoing basis as part of a Christian’s personal prayer life. Furthermore, the phrase “more than ye all” implies that the Christians at Corinth also spoke in tongues. So, in this third detailed instance of the Spirit infilling – the conversion of Paul – we continue to see the outward evidence of tongues consistent in those who have received the gift of the Holy Ghost. The presence of an outward sign so far remains a constant.

-The Gentiles in Caesarea:

The fourth account of the Spirit baptism centers on Cornelius, a Roman centurion (a captain over one hundred men) who lived in the city of Caesarea. We are told in Acts that he was devout, feared God, gave alms, prayed to God often, and even had an angelic visitation. Despite all this, he was not saved. The angel told him to send for Peter...

“And he shewed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.” –Acts 11:13-14

Cornelius was not a Jew either by birth or conversion, but a Gentile. At God’s command, Peter went to Caesarea and preached to

Cornelius and his household. We are told that while Peter was preaching, they all received the Holy Ghost and began to speak in tongues...

“While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.

And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.

For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God.”

–Acts 10:44-46a

And regarding tongues...

In Verse 46, Acts identifies speaking with tongues as the recognized sign of the baptism of the Spirit – the same gift that the Jews received on the Day of Pentecost. The Jewish Christians who came with Peter were astonished that the Gentiles received the Holy Ghost just as they did. Why? What was the sign, or proof, or evidence?

Verse 46: “For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God.” Again, we see the consistency of tongues manifesting when the Holy Ghost enters. This word “for” in the original Greek here, alone conclusively proves this even without all of the substantiating accounts we’re exploring. More will be discussed regarding this in the following section, entitled [Further Evidence That Tongues Is The Initial Sign Of The Spirit Baptism](#), beginning on page 422.

So, we see in this account that all of those who heard and accepted Peter's preaching received the gift of the Holy Ghost and spoke in tongues. This also marks the first time that Gentiles were baptized with the Spirit.

-The Believers at Ephesus:

We continue to see the same consistent salvation message and infilling experience in the story of the Ephesian believers in Acts 19. When Paul came across a number of believers at Ephesus, he immediately asked them the following...

"He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" -Acts 19:2a

Notice that Paul's question logically implies that you do not automatically receive the Holy Ghost when you mentally believe in Jesus. The believers responded by saying...

"And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." -Acts 19:2b

So, they confirmed that they had not yet received the Holy Ghost, despite being called "disciples" and "believers." These were apparently believers in Jesus Christ through the ministry of John the Baptist, as the Scripture tells us here that they were baptized into John's baptism of repentance, but were not yet baptized in Jesus' name. When Paul learned this, he preached to them the full gospel plan. They were then re-baptized in Jesus' name! Yet, even at this

time, they still had not yet received the Spirit! So, Paul then laid his hands on them and they all received the Holy Ghost and spoke in tongues...

“And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied. And all the men were about twelve.” –Acts 19:6-7

It is interesting to see Paul’s approach to these “believers.” He was not content until he asked two very important questions:

- Have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed?
- How were you baptized?

You must also ask yourself these same two questions! Notice that these men were already believers in the risen Christ, yet they were not even sure of the existence of the Holy Ghost. As we said, this is yet another Scriptural proof demonstrating that you don’t automatically get the Holy Ghost when you mentally “believe”! Paul’s first question takes for granted the possibility that one could be a believer in Christ and still not have had the Spirit-infilling experience. He then, recognizing their deficiency, expounded to them a more perfect understanding of the gospel plan, and they were then re-baptized correctly in the name of Jesus and received the Holy Ghost with the sign of tongues!

In other words, Paul preached to them the exact same gospel salvation message we saw at the beginning in Acts 2:38 – repent, be baptized in Jesus’ name, and receive the Holy Ghost! Furthermore,

this is yet another verse that contradicts the common denominational belief that baptism is just a public confirmation of your belief to be performed after you are saved. In most of these incidents we have discussed, the convert repents and is then baptized before receiving the Spirit – exactly in line with the order presented in Acts 2:38. However, there are examples in Acts where converts are filled with the Spirit before being baptized, so we should recognize that this is not a strictly fixed order. And yet, it still contradicts the popular denominational notion we just discussed.

And lastly, regarding tongues, this incident is extremely important to us today because it provides strong evidence that the baptism of the Spirit with the sign of tongues was the norm for the entire New Testament church. Not only is this evident from Paul's two questions, but it is apparent from the very fact that God chose to record this incident. If it were not for Acts 19, other accounts could possibly be "explained away" as unusual, one-time events. For example, Acts 2 records the birth of the church among the Jews, Acts 8 records the extension of the gospel to the Samaritans, and Acts 10 records its extension to the Gentiles. However, no such special circumstances existed in Acts 19. Acts 19 shows that the baptism of the Holy Ghost with tongues is for all who believe on Jesus!

-Conclusion:

After reviewing all five of these accounts, we must recognize several important concepts that Acts has emphasized:

- The baptism of the Holy Ghost is an essential part of salvation for the New Testament church (the new birth), and not an additional, optional experience subsequent to salvation.
- The baptism of the Holy Ghost is for all people in the New Testament church (from Pentecost to the rapture) not just for a special group segregated from us by race, nationality, time or position.
- Mentally believing in Jesus does not automatically give you the Holy Ghost. Believing is of course, a logical, and functional prerequisite – but receiving the Spirit is a distinct experience. This is proven in the numerous NT passages we examined in Acts. The entire purpose of the Day of Pentecost refutes the notion that one receives the Spirit immediately upon belief. On the Day of Pentecost, Jesus' most ardent believers had to have the experience of receiving the Holy Ghost, though all were already believers. Then in Acts 8, the Samaritans had believed and been water baptized, but did not yet receive the Spirit baptism until a later time. And in Acts 19, Paul encounters believers who believed in Jesus through the teachings of John the Baptist, but had not received the Holy Ghost.
- Although various other outward manifestations accompanied those who received the Holy Ghost at various times (e.g. a rushing mighty wind and flames of fire preceding the Spirit infilling in Acts 2, prophesying following tongues in Acts 19, etc.), the one consistently seen sign immediately and always present when converts receive the Holy Ghost is speaking in

unknown tongues. This is understood to be the initial sign that one has received the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

- Speaking in tongues is not gibberish or merely an unintelligible, ecstatic utterance without objective meaning. Those who genuinely speak in tongues are speaking in a genuine language, even though they themselves do not understand what they're saying. Sometimes observers incidentally recognize these tongues as being foreign earthly languages (Acts 2), although they are often unknown heavenly languages (1 Cor. 13:1). Speaking in tongues is not accidental, irrelevant, unimportant, or a rare phenomenon; it is a gift from God and was a consistent and significant initial authentication of the Spirit baptism in the Acts accounts – and one to be continually expected throughout one's life as a spontaneous but reoccurring part of prayer.
- Although there are additional conversion accounts that don't explicitly record the details of the new converts' Holy Ghost baptisms, we easily recognize that this is not a reason to doubt that they did in fact receive it just as those in the more specified accounts did. These vaguer accounts include the multitude that believed following the healing of the lame man (Acts 4:4), the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8), Lydia (Acts 16), and the Philippian jailer (Acts 16). The Bible simply does not go into the same amount of detail to describe of these conversions. Just as the Gospels record only representative miracles and events in Christ's ministry for lack of space (John 21:25), so Acts

describes only a sampling of the conversion experiences in full detail.

However, with the five detailed accounts of Holy Ghost baptisms included in Acts, Luke (the writer of Acts) recorded enough to clearly establish a precedent for every situation so that it was not necessary to record all of the details of every other case. We can conclude that these five detailed examples were meant to establish the pattern. The less specific cases should be understood in light of the five detailed examples given to us. Under no circumstances can mere silence or lack of a completely detailed description overthrow the clear evidence of the five cases Acts records.

So, those who say the Book of Acts is not for today bear the burden of proof. If Acts is not the pattern for the New Testament church, what is? Where in the Bible does God retract His promises relative to the baptism of the Spirit? Where does the Bible say the experience of the Book of Acts is not identical today? Why should we not expect the same experience that the early church experienced?

We must conclude that the promise of the Spirit is still ours today – and if it's repeated experience of tongues is not to be expected today, the burden of proof is upon the skeptic to demonstrate why it isn't. Furthermore, the direct personal experiences of millions of people worldwide absolutely shred any notion claiming the same experience is not for today. We know both from Scripture, as well as personal experience, that the Holy Ghost outpouring is the same today as it was in the beginning.

Further Evidence That Tongues Is The Initial Sign Of The Spirit Baptism

The issue of tongues is one of the most misunderstood points within the denominational world. In the past several sections of our study, we have highlighted the necessity of receiving the baptism of the Holy Ghost. There are few if any who would call themselves Christians who would deny the necessity of receiving the Spirit – however, they almost uniformly assume that one automatically receives the Spirit after “accepting Jesus as their personal Savior” or praying a so-called “sinner’s prayer” – with no objective initial sign confirming the endowment of the Spirit. This “accepting Jesus” doctrine is how mainstream denominational Christianity (at least Protestant denominations) generally teach the Spirit is received.

However, as we have seen already in this study, there are no Biblical commands to accept Jesus as a personal Savior. Rather, the New Testament gospel salvation message commands all to repent, be baptized in Jesus’ name, and receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost. But the Biblical examples we have examined that record Holy Spirit baptisms all seemed to demonstrate a uniform outward sign that confirmed to all (including the receiver) that the Spirit had entered – that sign being speaking in unknown tongues. We certainly understand why, psychologically, denominational mainstream Christians reject this idea of tongues as being the initial sign of the Spirit infilling – that being, because they have not experienced it, and have not witnessed it in their own churches. Since that is the case, and yet, they have been told by their clergy that they are saved because they have “accepted Jesus,” then psychologically, in order to believe

they truly are saved, they must reject the notion of tongues as being the sign. But if we try to separate our emotions from this issue and solely examine this on the basis of Scripture, the truth can be easily understood.

In the last section of our study, we already highlighted the main examples of Spirit infillings, which all pointed toward tongues as being the fixed outward sign. In this section, we will look deeper into this notion of speaking in unknown tongues as being the initial sign (or evidence) of the Spirit baptism. We will begin by looking at a passage found in John Chapter 3. This passage will also be further discussed later on in this study in a section entitled [The New Birth: Parallels Between The Spiritual And The Natural](#), beginning on page 482. But let's begin...

As a brief overview, John Chapter 3 involves a well-known discussion between Jesus and a Jewish religious leader named Nicodemus. Let's take a moment and read through this interaction, as it will help set the foundation for gaining a valuable revelation regarding tongues.

“There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:

The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?

Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.”

-John 3:1-7

But then Jesus says something that on the surface would sound strange. He says...

“The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”

-John 3:6-8

In other words, Jesus says that the movements of wind and the Spirit are both hard to predict, yet their “sound” manifests their presence. We need to pay attention to the Greek word translated as “sound” that is used here. This is the Greek word, “phóné” – Strong’s #G5456 – which literally means a voice, dialect, or language.

-<http://biblehub.com/greek/5456.htm> (Retrieved 3/22/18)

Jesus implies that those who are born of the Spirit will elicit a sound! You can tell the presence of the Spirit by a sound. But much more than just a sound, Jesus, using this Greek word, implied that it has a voice, language and dialect. Jesus does not specify this sound in this passage, but a look into the Book of Acts reveals what this sound alluded to by Jesus actually is. As we have mentioned throughout this study, that sign is tongues! The Greek word translated as “tongues”

used in Acts 2 means “languages” (the word *glóssa* – Strong’s #G1100). So, even in this early conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus, we find strong hints that this coming “Spirit birth” that Christ described, would be connected with a “sound” and “languages” – or tongues.

Another of the passages we examined in earlier sections is Acts Chapter 10 – in which Cornelius and his household became the first Gentiles to receive the Holy Ghost. Let’s reread this account in Acts Chapter 10 in order to recall what happened as Peter preached about Jesus to the members of Cornelius’ household...

“While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.

And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.

For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter,

Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?

And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.

Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.”

-Acts 10:44-48

Ok, now let’s go back and refocus on a certain portion of this passage in order to gain a deeper understanding regarding tongues. We’re focusing back on the end of Verse 45 and the first half of Verse 46...

“...on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God.”

–Acts 10:45b-46a

Now, just in the plain English, this sounds quite clear. The believers that accompanied Peter were astonished that the Holy Ghost filled the Gentiles. How did they know it did? “For they heard them speak with tongues...” Tongues was the sign that demonstrated to them that they had received the Holy Ghost.

But let’s examine this deeper by going back to the original Greek wording. In this passage, the word “for” was translated from the Greek word, “gar,” which is a conjunction used to express cause, explanation, inference or continuation (Strong’s #G1063). It denotes affirmation or conclusion of a foregoing statement – according to Thayer’s Greek Lexicon.

–<http://biblehub.com/greek/1063.htm> (Retrieved 3/22/18)

In other words, it is a mechanism used to express cause in the previous phrase. So very simply, it declares clearly that those with Peter knew these people had received the Holy Ghost due to, or because of, or evidenced by, their speaking in tongues! This Greek word alone provides conclusive grammatical evidence that tongues is the initial outward sign of the Holy Ghost baptism and must not be overlooked. Tongues was the indisputable sign in Acts 2 on the Day of Pentecost, it was the indisputable sign here in Acts 10 with the Gentiles, and it was the indisputable sign in Acts 19 with the Ephesian believers.

We see this consistency throughout Acts – even seeing inferences to the occurrence of tongues in the conversion instances that don't state it explicitly. For instance, let's look back at another passage we looked at earlier – Acts Chapter 8. This was the account of the Samaritans first being evangelized...

“Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost:

(For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)

Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.

And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.” –Acts 8:14-19

In this passage, it is clear that something significant happened when these believers received the Holy Ghost! In fact, so significant that Simon the Magician offered the Apostles money in exchange for being able to have the power to “give” people the Holy Ghost.

This passage makes no sense at all in view of the modern denominational teachings that say a person receives the Spirit through repeating a “sinner's prayer” or “making a decision to accept Christ.” When you take literally this excerpt from Acts 8 that depicts

converts receiving the Holy Ghost, it becomes obvious that something different was happening. The Biblical representation of receiving the Holy Ghost cannot even remotely be equated with the two aforementioned denominational practices. Instead, something clear, obvious, outward, observable, and immediate was happening in this account in Acts 8, and it was evidence of the Spirit infilling. We know from studying other Scriptures that describe people receiving the Spirit that the sign Simon saw and was so impressed with was that they spoke in other tongues!

It is important to note that the manifestation of the gift of the Holy Ghost as evidenced by tongues is not just a New Testament development. The Old Testament prophet Isaiah foretold the role of tongues in the future (related to the New Covenant)...

“For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people.

To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing; yet they would not hear.”

–Isaiah 28:11-12

This Old Testament passage mentions the unusual phenomenon of speaking in tongues in reference to a future rest to be received. This experience is not mentioned as being fulfilled anywhere in the Old Testament following, or anywhere in the gospels. This is only ever fulfilled in Acts in the experience of receiving the Holy Ghost, and is very thoroughly documented. Furthermore, Paul quoted this passage in Isaiah to provide a prophetic Scriptural precedent for speaking in tongues...

“In the law (Old Testament) it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord.

Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not:” -1 Corinthians 14:21-22a

In Paul’s context here, he seems to be focusing moreso on the Gift of Tongues – but regardless, this passage as well as the record of Acts clearly conveys to us that as a whole, tongues are for a sign and are connected to the indwelling Holy Spirit in the church. We understand from Scripture that God is not the author of confusion – 1

Corinthians 14:33. In fact, this statement is made in the context of Paul’s dissertation on the appropriate use of tongues in the church! So, God is not the author of confusion in any area – but specifically here, referring to tongues. It is characteristic of Him to establish a sign, or outward evidence to the individual, the church community, and unbelievers that one has received the Holy Ghost. Otherwise, without a sign, how is one to know they received it?

The Greek word for “sign” used in this passage (1 Cor. 14:22 “tongues are for a sign”), is *sémeion* (Strong’s #G4592). HELPS Word Studies defines *sémeion* as “a sign (typically miraculous), given especially to confirm, corroborate or authenticate.”

-<http://biblehub.com/greek/4592.htm> (Retrieved 3/22/18)

As mentioned earlier, we know that Paul’s writing in 1 Corinthians 14:21, is actually a quotation of Isaiah 28:11-12, which clearly is fulfilled only beginning with Pentecost (the initial outpouring of the Holy Spirit).

Therefore, we can clearly understand that Paul's usage of the word "sign" in the next verse (linked by the word "wherefore"), clearly demonstrates that tongues are the sign that confirms, corroborates and authenticates the Pentecostal experience of receiving the Holy Spirit – the fulfillment of this "rest" that was promised!

Thayer's Greek Lexicon describes the context of the usage of *sémeion* in 1 Cor. 14:22 as being a sign by which one is warned, an admonition. ("Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not...").

-*ibid.* (Retrieved 3/22/18)

HELPS Word Studies defines *á pistos* (Strong's #G571), the Greek word for "believe not" in this passage as meaning "not faithful because unpersuaded, i.e. not convinced."

-<http://biblehub.com/greek/571.htm> (Retrieved 3/22/18)

So, when we put this all together, Paul is clear from this passage that speaking in unknown tongues is a confirming, corroborating, and authenticating sign of the Spirit to nonbelievers who are yet unpersuaded. It serves as a warning that might persuade them of the reality of the indwelling Holy Spirit – and in Paul's context especially, the Gifts of the Spirit in operation. It also serves as an admonition for the unbeliever to become persuaded of the availability of, and necessity of receiving the Spirit.

Furthermore, Thayer's Greek Lexicon states that *sémeion* (or "sign") can also be used in a condemnatory sense.

-<http://biblehub.com/greek/4592.htm> (Retrieved 3/22/18)

In other words, tongues condemn the unbeliever, as they are the evidence of the indwelling Spirit, which the unbeliever does not possess. We understand that “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his” (Romans 8:9b).

The indwelling Holy Spirit is our down payment on heaven, according to Ephesians 1...

“ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest (meaning, “down payment”) of our inheritance (meaning, “eternal life in heaven”) until the redemption of the purchased possession (meaning, “until Jesus comes back to get us”).” -Ephesians 1:13b-14a

So, the Holy Spirit is the down payment, and tongues, which come along with it, is the authentication. From what we can witness in the record of the New Testament, the early church experienced the outward sign of tongues when they received the Holy Ghost, and it stayed with them throughout their Christian walk, continuing to manifest as a part of their personal prayer life.

However, although speaking in tongues is the initial sign or initial evidence of the Spirit baptism, it by itself does not necessarily prove the Spirit's abiding presence on an ongoing basis. As the new Christian matures in his Christian walk, many other more important signs of the Spirit's presence should begin to manifest, such as the Fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). In particular, love is the ultimate test

of true discipleship (John 13:34-35). After receiving the Holy Ghost, the true child of God will love God, obey His commandments with joy, walk after the Spirit, and be led by the Spirit (1 John 2:3-5; Rom. 8:4, 14). In the absence of these characteristics, speaking in tongues is not necessarily the ultimate conclusion that the Spirit is dwelling in and leading one's life on an ongoing basis.

After receiving the Spirit, an individual will determine whether or not they live by it and will be led by it. But tongues are clearly the consistent Biblical sign of the initial infilling, and we should expect every person who receives the Holy Ghost to immediately begin speaking in unknown tongues at the moment the Spirit enters.

The Biblical Usages Of The Term “Believer”

Before moving on, it is helpful to look further at the usage of the term “believer” found in the New Testament. In our study, we have already encountered several examples where this term, or some form of it is used – the most recent being the example of Paul witnessing to believers in Ephesus (Acts 19). We must recognize that Scripture uses this term in several different ways. If we don’t recognize this, we are at risk of misunderstanding the meaning of these passages and ultimately drawing mistaken conclusions.

It is helpful to recognize that this term “believer” or “believed” is used both connotatively and denotatively – each indicating something slightly different. Connotative usage is a word’s associated or secondary meaning; it can be something suggested or implied by a word or thing, rather than being explicitly named or described. Denotative usage refers to a word’s explicit or direct meaning.

-<http://www.dictionary.com/e/denotation-and-connotation/> (Retrieved 3/20/18)

The connotative and denotative meanings of words are both correct, but a word’s connotation determines how it is used. When reading literature, this must be understood in order to come away with the author’s intended meaning. We must therefore recognize this in Scripture, and discern the meaning by the context and by recalling what Scripture clearly defines for us in other passages. If you do not do this, you will end up concluding that the Bible is contradictory. Remember: precision is key! So, let’s examine these usages...

Let's first talk about the denotative usage. Denotation marks the dictionary meaning of a word. But quite often, simply looking up a word in a dictionary does not do justice to fully understanding the context of a word or the way it is used in the Bible, because the connotation has shifted the meaning of the word. The Bible at times uses the term "believer" or "belief" in a more denotative sense (the plain dictionary definition). Within the salvation experience for instance, "belief" is sometimes used in the literal sense, meaning a mental belief in Jesus Christ as being the Son of God. Obviously, this mental belief is required in order to then obey the salvation plan. So, we should recognize that at times the term "belief" is meant specifically in this denotative, explicit way.

But then the Bible often moves to a more metaphorical (or connotative) sense of the term "believer," to mean "those who have received salvation." Connotation deals strongly with metaphorical text; this reflects how the words are used and what they mean in a social context. So, at certain times when the Bible uses the term "believers," it is using it in a way that reflects the way it would be understood within the social context of the church. It is used to essentially mean "a Christian" – or more specifically, "one who has entered into the group called the church through obedience to the gospel (repentance, baptism, and Spirit infilling)."

In this way, it becomes used almost like a synecdoche. A synecdoche is a figure of speech that uses the general to mean the specific, or the specific to mean the general. An example of a synecdoche is saying, "Lend me a hand." Well, you don't mean that you just want the person's hand; you really mean you want the entire person to come

and help you with something. It is using the specific to mean the general. Another example is saying, “New York won the World Series.” Well, the entire city didn’t win; but specifically, the baseball team did. This example uses the general to mean the specific.

The Bible does this with the term “belief” or “believer”. Sometimes it specifically just means the act of mentally believing something – such as that Jesus Christ is the Son of God – but it specifically just means that belief. Other times it uses it in the general sense to mean someone who has believed – and therefore obeyed – Jesus’ commands. It becomes used as a general label for a saved Christian, not just someone with a mental assent. In other words, since we know from Scripture that the human involvement in the process of “being saved” requires faith, repentance, baptism, and the Spirit, the term “believer” should then be understood as a general heading that implies someone who has obeyed all of these commands.

In some ways, this is similar to the way we use the label “physician.” In our society, a physician is a term given that generally implies the individual has gone to undergraduate college, medical school, completed residency, perhaps a fellowship, and is currently in practice. When we refer to a physician, it is socially understood that he/she has completed all of those things. Perhaps this is a clumsy analogy, but it may help convey the connotative usage of the term believer. We don’t expect Scripture to spell out the fact that they’ve repented, been baptized, and received the spirit each time a Christian is referenced. The Bible simply uses “believer” as a label for this. So, we can see that the Bible uses this term in both a denotative (plain

dictionary definition) sense, as well as a connotative (understood social context) sense.

Let's examine some of the connotative and denotative ways we see this word "belief" or "believer" used in the New Testament. Let's start by taking a look at the Acts 19 account we just discussed...

"And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples,
He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" –Acts 19:1-2

When reading this account, we see that the Bible describes these men as "believers" in Jesus in a more denotative or specific definitional sense. They mentally believed in Him to some degree (we can infer that they believed Jesus to be the Son of God), but they clearly had not obeyed the gospel, and were not yet saved. We learn through reading Paul's questioning of them that they hadn't been baptized correctly and they hadn't received the Spirit.

The next passage we will look at also depicts belief in the denotative, or specific definitional sense. It records a man coming to the initial mental belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Yet, from this passage and others, it is clear that the obedience that accompanies true belief is quite distinct. For example, we see that in this passage, baptism is distinct from mental belief – belief is used only in the denotative sense here...

“And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?

And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”

–Acts 8:36-37

So, the eunuch acknowledged belief in the denotative sense – meaning a mental assent that Jesus is the Son of God. Yet, as we see, he had not yet obeyed the gospel, and therefore, could not yet be called a “believer” in the connotative sense.

There is also one somewhat unique passage in the Gospels that seems to present a partially specific usage. However, this passage is not a great example of the typical usage of “belief” in the New Testament church sense, being that this is yet pre-Pentecost...

“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” –Mark 16:16

Jesus knew of His future commands to repent and receive the Holy Ghost, and undoubtedly had that in mind when He used the term “believeth.” But since the gospel was yet future – as Jesus hadn’t yet died, been buried, and resurrected – we would not expect Him to proclaim it in detail here. But since we see a specific reference to the requirement of baptism, we may categorize this unique passage as a “partially specific” usage of the term “belief.” In other words, His term “believeth” obviously included the future commands of repentance and receiving the Spirit, as well as baptism, yet He mentioned baptism

separately by name. Keep in mind that although this passage was prior to Pentecost, the Jews would have already been quite familiar with the ceremonial cleansing of baptism (called a mikvah), which is possibly the reason Jesus mentioned it specifically here.

So, we have looked at some denotative uses, but let's now examine some connotative uses. The Bible also clearly uses the term "believers" in a more general or connotative sense – to indicate fully initiated Christians who had fully obeyed the gospel. For example, 1 Timothy 4:2 says...

"Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." -1 Timothy 4:2

In this passage, obviously, the term "believers" refers to a fully initiated Christian. Timothy was not only a mental believer in Jesus as Son of God, but he was actively involved in the ministry. So, this connotative sense indicates someone who had obeyed the gospel plan of repentance, baptism, and receiving the Spirit.

An even more detailed example of the connotative usage of "believe" in the New Testament is found in the account of the conversion of the Philippian jailer in Acts 16. In this passage, the jailer asks Paul and Silas what he must do to be saved. They respond by saying, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." They obviously didn't just mean a mental belief, for two verses later, it tells us that he and his entire household were baptized that same night after Paul and Silas "spoke unto them the word of the Lord." Let's read...

“Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas,
And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?
And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.
And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.
And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.
And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.”
-Acts 16:29-34

So, it is clear that “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ” was a phrase that meant much more than a simple mental assent, as most Christians today wrongly believe. Unfortunately, they apply the modern English definition of “belief,” meaning mental assent – and in doing so, they ignore all of the other clear New Testament commands regarding salvation. As we discussed earlier in this study, especially in the culture of that time, “belief” was an action word that involved obedience or appropriation. It meant a total surrender of one’s life.

When Paul and Silas answered the jailer’s question by saying “Believe on Jesus,” they were not giving him a different message than the Jews got on Pentecost when they asked Peter the same basic question. Both Peter and Paul and Silas gave their audiences the same message, as evidenced by the fact that the jailer and his entire household did not just “mentally believe,” but actually were baptized

that same night. The passage also describes a distinct joyous experience, which we can infer was a result of the Spirit infilling, although this story does not specifically address the Spirit. But it doesn't have to – we have many other specific examples that do address all of the details. And from the aggregate of accounts provided to us in Acts (both more detailed and less detailed accounts), we can clearly see that the salvation message first delivered in Acts 2:38 was the consistent pattern preached and experienced by the early church.

So, in this passage, we see that the phrase “believe on Jesus” was essentially a connotative slogan or a catchphrase that included and implied obedience to the gospel plan. This is also made obvious in the simple fact that the following verse then says, “And they spake unto him the word of the Lord.” In other words, if all they had to do was mentally believe, Paul and Silas wouldn't have had to say much else. But rather, this implies that Paul and Silas then broke down for them what “belief on Jesus” actually meant – and in response, we see the jailer and his household being baptized. We can then safely conclude that they were given the same salvation message as the audiences in Acts 2, 8, 10, 19, and others.

Put simply, the usages of “belief” and “believer” in the New Testament church sense are as follows...

-Specific (denotative):

Belief that Jesus is the Son of God

-General (connotative):

Since one believes that Jesus is the Son of God, he enters into the church through obedience to the gospel – repentance, baptism, receiving the Holy Ghost. He is then referred to in the general sense as a “believer.” The connotation of the word “believer” involves the implication that the individual has done this. In this sense it is also like a synecdoche. It mentions a specific part of Christian initiation (belief), but is a general label understood to mean a person who had been fully initiated as a Christian (full obedience to the gospel).

So, due to the proliferation of the false salvation message that teaches a person just has to mentally believe, we found it necessary to indulge in this exploration of the denotative vs. the connotative usage of terms in language.

The Necessity Of The Holy Ghost Baptism For The Believer

Receiving the Holy Ghost baptism is not optional for a true believer. In fact, the entire foundation of the New Covenant is based on this distinctive gift of the Spirit indwelling. The Spirit taking up residence inside the heart of the believer is the underpinning of the unique difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant.

Receiving the Spirit of the risen Christ into you is not only necessary, but is undoubtedly the most profound privilege that can be imagined. Let's examine the necessity of the Holy Ghost baptism further. We will do this by examining several points and then looking into Scripture to see if they are supported. Let's begin...

-Scripture makes it clear that without the Holy Ghost, one is not a part of the kingdom of God, and does not belong to Jesus...

"But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." -Romans 8:9

"And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us." -1 John 3:24

"For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."
-Romans 14:17

“Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.” -1 John 4:13

“Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”
-John 3:5

-Jesus made it clear that the Spirit baptism is a promise made available to all believers:

“If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?”
-Luke 11:13

“But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” -John 4:14

What water is He talking about? Water in Scripture is idiomatic of the Holy Spirit. This is evidenced in the following quotation, in which Jesus clarified more precisely what He meant by this water...

“In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.
He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.”

(But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)” –John 7:37-39

Before we list any more passages, it is necessary to examine this last one more closely, as it teaches several very important things:

- The Holy Ghost is promised to all who believe on Jesus.
- Belief in Christ must be in accordance with the teaching of Scripture (“...as the Scripture hath said”).
- The gift of the Holy Ghost to which Jesus referred did not come until after His glorification, which was accomplished by His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension. He specifically spoke concerning the future outpouring of the Spirit beginning at Pentecost, and this is the experience all believers should receive.

Shortly before Christ’s death, He emphasized to His disciples that the Holy Ghost would come after He left them. Furthermore, He said the Holy Ghost would be Himself in another form – in Spirit rather than in flesh...

“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;
Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.”

“I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.”

–John 14:16-18

So, Jesus had promised the outpouring of the Holy Ghost (the Comforter) to His followers, but this would only take place at a later time, following His ascension.

–Jesus reiterated the promise of the Spirit after His resurrection and turned it into a command. He commanded His disciples to receive the Holy Ghost...

“And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost:” –John 20:22

They did not receive the Holy Ghost at that time, as Luke’s account – as well as Acts 1:4-5, and 8 – make clear...

“And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.”

–Luke 24:49

So, it is not difficult to see the emphasis placed on receiving the Holy Ghost by none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. You must understand that from the beginning, it was always His plan to send His Spirit to take up residence inside of His believers!

Having the Spirit alive inside of us is the mechanism that propels us into the fullness of what the New Testament is all about. We must maintain a mindset of eagerness to obey the Lord’s command to

receive His Spirit. But an even more accurate understanding is that we should recognize the astonishing privilege and honor it is to partake in the receiving of this amazing gift, paid for through the sinless blood of the perfect sacrifice, Jesus Christ!

The Necessity Of Full Obedience To The Gospel New Birth Plan

As we have shown throughout this study, the Biblical message of the new birth, or gospel plan of salvation, includes three main aspects. The Biblical pattern is to experience all three – repentance, water baptism, and the baptism of the Spirit (Acts 2:38). We consistently witness the Scriptural pattern for new converts being the full Acts 2:38 experience.

Often, those in denominational Christianity assert that the Spirit infilling occurs at the decision to “accept Jesus as one’s personal Savior,” at repeating a “sinner’s prayer,” or at baptism. It is also commonly claimed that “baptism is secondary to salvation and/or is optional.” But the New Testament record clearly refutes these incorrect notions, consistently demonstrating that all three experiences are separate and necessary. It continually demonstrates that water baptism is a distinct experience from Spirit baptism, and both follow an initial belief in Jesus Christ and repentance.

This necessity of full obedience is proven in the following passages, which we will examine by category. You will notice that as we go through the following categories of passages, a precise reading of Scripture will demonstrate that throughout the record of Acts, the message is clear that without all three aspects of the new birth, one has not fully completed the Christian salvation plan...

-Repentance + Baptism, but no Spirit:

Acts 8 describes the Samaritans receiving salvation through the evangelism initiated by Philip. As we pointed out earlier in our study, by reading this chapter, we find that the Samaritans – through Philip’s preaching – believed in Jesus, repented, were water baptized, and even witnessed miracles – yet they had not yet received the Spirit. So, Peter and John were sent to pray for them that they might receive the Spirit.

Many modern denominational Christians claim that one receives the Spirit automatically at the point of “belief in Jesus” or at repentance. This passage contradicts that claim, as the Samaritans had believed and repented, and even been baptized, but had not yet received the Spirit. This also contradicts the claim that Spirit infilling comes automatically at water baptism. Let’s read...

“Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost:

(For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)

Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.” –Acts 8:15-17

So, even though the Samaritans had already been water baptized in Jesus’ name following belief and repentance (which we see earlier in the chapter), they still needed to receive the Spirit. This proves that they are not the same experience. Repentance, baptism, and receiving the Holy Ghost are separate and distinct experiences – and all three are essential!

-Repentance + Spirit, but no Baptism:

Acts 10 describes the Gentiles in Cornelius' household receiving salvation through the preaching of Peter. In this chapter, we see that the Gentiles believed Peter's preaching about Jesus, obviously had repentant hearts, and then the Spirit fell on them. However, they had not yet been water-baptized.

Once they were Spirit-filled, Peter then wasted no time commanding them to be baptized in water in Jesus' name. Like we mentioned earlier, some modern Christians have wrongly claimed that the Spirit is received automatically at water baptism. But both of these passages we've examined show that idea to be incorrect. While we agree that the Spirit certainly can be received during water baptism, we emphasize that water and Spirit baptism are two separate and distinct experiences that follow repentance – and both are essential. Let's read...

“While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.

And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.

For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter,

Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?

And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.

Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.”

-Acts 10:44-48

So, even though Cornelius and his household had already believed in Jesus, had repentant hearts, and received the Spirit, Peter then commanded them to be baptized in Jesus' name. Again, this proves that water and Spirit baptism are two separate experiences, and are both essential. As soon as they were Spirit filled, Peter wasted no time getting them to agree to baptism – according to the same salvation message he himself had delivered at the beginning in Acts 2.

-Repentance + Incorrect Baptism, but no Spirit:

Acts 19 describes the Ephesian believers that Paul encountered, who had not yet obeyed the fullness of the gospel new birth salvation plan. Through the questions of Paul, we find that these disciples had believed, and also been baptized (although insufficiently, by way of John's baptism) – but they had not yet received the Spirit. Again, this passage demonstrates that believing, repenting, being water baptized, and receiving the Spirit are separate and distinct aspects of salvation. This passage also demonstrates that how you were baptized matters, as we find these believers were then rebaptized in Jesus' name. Let's read...

“And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples,
He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.

And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism.

Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.

When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied."

-Acts 19:1-6

So, even though these believers in Ephesus had already believed and been baptized, they still had not received the Holy Ghost – again proving that believing in Jesus does not equate to Spirit infilling. You do not automatically receive the Spirit when you believe in Jesus, as denominational Christianity constantly asserts. Additionally, they were not baptized sufficiently as in accordance with the gospel command given in Acts 2:38. So, Paul had them re-baptized in Jesus' name (for they had been previously baptized into John's baptism of repentance). Following their re-baptism, Paul then laid hands on them and they received the Holy Ghost with the sign of tongues. So again, we continue to see that when looking precisely at the text of these recorded instances, it is clear and obvious that the modern mainstream version of the salvation command to "accept Jesus" (with inferred automatic Spirit infilling) is remote from the testimony of Scripture.

-Two Additional Examples:

Lastly, Acts Chapters 8 and 16 describe two instances of Spirit infillings that are in some ways less descriptive, and yet still communicate to us the distinction between these three aspects of the salvation plan. In these chapters, we find that the Ethiopian eunuch and the Philippian jailer both received a distinct joyous experience after they were baptized, which apparently was the baptism of the Spirit, though not specified in these cases (Acts 8:36-39; 16:31-34). So, again, although these accounts are a bit more vague in nature, we can still see the Acts 2:38 salvation command of repentance, water baptism, and Spirit baptism being experienced by early converts.

To conclude, after looking at these Scriptural examples, we should recognize that the salvation plan is incomplete without obedience to all three – repentance, baptism, and receiving the Spirit. And obviously, believing that Jesus Christ is the risen Son of God is a prerequisite to all three. This is the consistent message beginning with the first sermon preached in the history of the church (Peter on the Day of Pentecost). And this is the same message we see demonstrated in all of the detailed records of new converts being saved in the New Testament. The message was always the same: Repent, be baptized in Jesus' name, and receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Since no Scriptural instruction was given that should alter or retract this pattern, then we should follow those same commands today.

The Purposes Of The Holy Ghost

Up to this point, we have established from Scripture that the Holy Ghost was poured out beginning on the Day of Pentecost. We have established that it is intended for all believers in Jesus. And we have established that the initial evidence or sign of the infilling of the Spirit is speaking in unknown tongues. In the next section, we will begin to deal with the topic of how to receive the Holy Ghost. But before doing that, it is important to first recognize the purposes of the Holy Ghost. What is this unique phenomenon of the indwelling of God's Spirit intended to do in the life of the Christian? In this section, we will point out a number of purposes that the Bible says the indwelling Spirit will fulfill. Let's begin...

-Our Teacher:

First of all, the Spirit is our Teacher.

“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”

-John 14:26

So, one purpose of the Holy Ghost is to teach us all things, and bring the Word of God to our remembrance and understanding. Notice that it said all things. The Holy Ghost can teach you in all areas of life if you are closely walking with the Lord. This goes beyond just theological revelations – this gets into everyday life. When you are truly walking in the Spirit, the Holy Ghost can teach you how to cook,

how to dress, how to shop, how to be good at your job, and how to raise your family. The Holy Ghost is the ultimate Teacher, and He can lead and guide you in all areas of your life, if you allow Him.

-To Refresh Us and Bring Rest:

Another purpose of the Spirit is to refresh us and bring us rest.

“For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people.

To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear.”

-Isaiah 28:11-12

Here in Isaiah, we catch a prophetic Old Testament glimpse of the then-future outpouring of the Holy Ghost and what it would provide in the life of the receiver. There is rest, peace, and refreshing in the life of the believer who experiences continual renewal of the Spirit. Receiving the Spirit happens at a certain point in time, but after receiving it initially, it is intended to be a lifestyle – not just a one-time experience. “Living in the Spirit” is what provides rest on a continual basis.

-To Show Us Things to Come:

A third purpose of the Holy Ghost is to show us things to come, or in other words, to give us supernatural understanding of future things that we couldn't have known ourselves.

“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.”

-John 16:13

Many times, He will reveal hidden dangers to us and shows us in advance things that are going to come to pass.

-To Give Us Power to Witness:

Another purpose for the indwelling Holy Ghost is to give us power to be witnesses of Christ and the gospel to the world.

“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”

-Acts 1:8

Witnessing, or evangelism is one of the main objectives of the church. The word translated as “witness” here actually comes from the Greek word “martus,” from which we get our English word “martyr,” meaning one who dies for their witness (Strong’s #G3144).

So, on a deeper level, the Spirit gives us power to die out to our carnal, worldly desires and dedicate ourselves to holy living – allowing us to become true witnesses or examples of Christ to the world. A life totally given over to Jesus and totally lead by His Spirit is the greatest witness possible. By living this way, you are demonstrating

Christ to the world in a way not possible through just proclaiming the gospel. A Spirit-led Christian should live the gospel!

-To Resurrect Us at His Coming:

One final purpose for the Holy Ghost indwelling the believer is to resurrect us at the rapture of the church (when the church is supernaturally removed from earth, or in the Greek, literally being “caught up.”)

“But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.” -Romans 8:11

This event, known as the rapture, is described by Scripture as being the “blessed hope,” and ultimate aspiration of all Christians. The word being used in this passage – quicken – means to give life, or resurrect. But if His Spirit does not/did not dwell in us, there will be nothing to quicken – or resurrect – our mortal bodies.

So, we have gone through a number of specific purposes of the Holy Ghost that the Bible details for us. But in addition to these things, the very fact that He is called the Comforter means that He will soothe us in distress and sorrow, ease the misery of our grief, bring consolation and hope, give us aid in the time of trouble, and encourage us. What more could we ask for in this life? And why wouldn't anyone want to receive the Spirit, not only because it is essential for salvation, but also because all of these benefits come built in? In the next section, we will discuss the topic of how to receive the Holy Ghost.

How To Receive The Holy Ghost

Let's now begin to discuss the way we receive the Holy Ghost, according to Scripture. Since the baptism of the Holy Ghost is part of salvation and is available to us today, it is not difficult to receive. God promises His Spirit to all who...

- believe in Jesus (John 7:38-39),
- ask (Luke 11:13), and
- obey His Word (Acts 5:32).

The seeker must also have faith in God's promise to bestow the Spirit, for without faith it is impossible to please God, much less receive His promised gift (Hebrews 11:6).

Our third bullet point above emphasizes the necessity of obedience to God's Word in the context of receiving the Spirit. Peter preached the promise of the Spirit to all who would repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus (Acts 2:38). The example of Cornelius (Acts 10) shows that the baptism of the Spirit can actually precede water baptism. At the point of complete submission and released faith, God pours out His Spirit.

Though the Spirit can be received before obedience to baptism, it does require repentance first. For the Holy Spirit to dwell in a life, that person must have made a decision to turn from sin and separate himself from spiritual uncleanness (2 Cor. 6:16-7:1). He does not have

to be righteous first, for true righteousness in the New Covenant context is only achieved through the indwelling leading of the Spirit. Rather, the decision that he will turn from unrighteousness is what repentance involves and is the requirement for the Spirit to enter.

When the person makes that initial decision to repent, regardless of when he may or may not receive the Spirit, he needs to begin to act upon that decision in order to combine his intentions to repent with an actual change of actions, constituting true Biblical repentance. Often, a barrier to receiving the Spirit can be a decision to repent followed by a prolonged failure of taking action to change. In this situation, God will withhold filling the individual with His Spirit because He knows true repentance and submission has not taken place in the person's heart. Repentance in the heart always leads to change in actions. God knows the heart (Acts 15:8) and should never be "blamed" for not bestowing His Spirit. He has already stated in His Word that the Spirit is for everyone (Acts 2:39), and that it is His desire that all be saved (2 Peter 3:9).

If someone wants the baptism of the Holy Spirit, he should come to God with faith, believing His Word and expecting to receive the promise. He should repent of his sins by confessing them, asking pardon, pledging to do God's will (with His help), and totally surrendering to Him. He should determine in his mind that he wants God's Spirit that very day, regardless of what God may require of him in the future. After he repents and makes this total commitment, he should begin to praise God for hearing and answering prayer. Then, the Spirit will come in, take complete control, and inspire the seeker to speak in a language unknown to him that he does not understand.

Often, the laying on of hands by believers following repentance helps the seeker focus his faith at a point in time and receive the Spirit. This was a very common practice in the early church, although it was not a prerequisite for receiving the Spirit.

Receiving the Spirit is only as difficult as the seeker makes it. It only takes as much time as he needs to repent and surrender completely to God, which may be just a moment. Tarrying for long periods of time or seeking many times is not necessary from God's standpoint. However, the seeker often makes it "harder" than it should be due to a number of possible reasons. Those who do not receive the Spirit when seeking it either lack faith to receive or have not fully repented and yielded every area of their lives to God. God knows the heart, motives, and intentions of man.

How Does Speaking In Tongues Occur?

Genuine Biblical tongues speaking comes only as the Spirit of God gives the utterance (Acts 2:4). From the examples we discussed earlier, it should be understood that speaking in tongues occurs when the Holy Ghost enters the individual. They will immediately begin to manifest the sign of tongues as the Spirit enters. This is the pattern recorded in Acts, and we have no command to deviate from this same expectancy today. A person seeking the Holy Ghost should focus on seeking the Holy Ghost, rather than focusing on speaking in tongues. The Spirit is the center of importance rather than the tongues.

Tongues will automatically manifest when the Spirit enters, even if the individual knows little or nothing about the evidence of tongues. Of course, if one is not familiar with the phenomenon of speaking in tongues, he may unconsciously restrain the utterance. In such a case, the seeker should be encouraged to relax and surrender totally to God's Spirit. In no case does he ever need to be "taught" to speak in tongues. Any encouragement by others to "help" him form unknown words or repeat unknown syllables in order to "kick start" the tongues, or for any other reason is unbiblical and wrong. This behavior seeks to give tongues without the Spirit, and any "tongues" not inspired by the Spirit is vain babbling. In fact, no observers or other believers even need to be present in order for the seeker to receive the Spirit and begin to speak in tongues. But with that being said, it does often help the seeker to have genuine Spirit-filled believers there with him to pray, instruct, and encourage him in the correct manner. Someone who has not received the Spirit yet but is

seeking should not concern himself too much with tongues but should concentrate on repenting and believing God for the promised Spirit.

After receiving the Spirit initially with the evidence of tongues, one should expect the experience to reoccur in their Christian walk at various times as the Spirit moves, such as in prayer, song, church services, or even at unexpected times. The Holy Ghost filled believer can exercise the manifestation of speaking in tongues in his own personal devotions (whether private or congregational) for his own personal edification (“building up” or strengthening) (1 Cor. 14:1-4, 14-18).

It is important to recognize that one individual speaking in tongues more easily or more often than another individual is not necessarily an indicator of deeper spirituality. With that being said, a continual failure to be able to pray “in the spirit” (in tongues), may indicate a drifting away from God. Paul spoke in tongues frequently (1 Cor. 14:8) and those who receive the Spirit usually speak in tongues again and again throughout their lifetimes if they are living for the Lord. Since speaking in tongues is beneficial for personal edification, we believe that God desires a Spirit filled person to seek and utilize praying in tongues regularly.

We should emphasize that genuine speaking in tongues absolutely happens by unction of the Spirit – but yet, as the speaker, you have some control over it. In other words, it is wrong to say that you can arbitrarily “turn the tongues on and off,” but yet you certainly can willingly or unwillingly stifle or prevent them by not yielding to that Spirit unction. Tongues is not exercised according to your will, but

rather, you feel the Spirit moving in you at times and you can feel the familiar feeling coming into your tongue that wants to be let loose to speak out. This is how the Spirit prays through you – it is not a product of your mental or willful thinking, but instead, a yielding response to the Spirit.

In support of this point, some interesting research has been conducted in recent years, which verifies not only the reality of tongues, but also the fact that it is a phenomenon directed by God instead of man. Researchers at the University of Pennsylvania took brain images of five women while they spoke in tongues (using hymn singing as a control group) and found that their frontal lobes – the thinking, willful part of the brain through which people control what they do – were relatively quiet, as were the language centers. In other words, they found diminished activity in the area of the brain (namely the prefrontal cortex), which normally lights up when you're doing something on purpose.

The images (which are the first of their kind taken), appearing in an issue of the journal "Psychiatry Research: Neuroimaging," pinpoint the most active areas of the brain. The findings contrasted sharply with images taken of other supposedly spiritually inspired mental states such as meditation, which is often a highly focused mental exercise, activating the frontal lobes.

-Andrew B. Newberg, Nancy A. Wintering, Donna Morgan, and Mark R. Waldman, "The Measurement of Regional Cerebral Blood Flow During Glossolalia: A Preliminary SPECT study," *Psychiatry Research: Neuroimaging*, Vol. 148, Issue 1, Nov. 2006, pp. 67-71.

Put another way, it is neuroscientific evidence that corroborates the idea that true Spirit-filled individuals are not faking tongues, but are in a genuine state where the Spirit is directing what is being said instead of the brain.

Why did God choose tongues as the sign of the Spirit baptism? First, we must realize that God is sovereign; He can establish a plan without explaining His reasons to us. The foolishness of God is wiser than men, and God often uses unusual, seemingly foolish, or despised things in the eyes of men to accomplish His will (1 Cor. 1:25-29). Other examples are water baptism for the remission of sins and prayer to the invisible God.

We must accept speaking in tongues because God chose this sign. God has historically used physical, outward signs to accompany His covenants with man and the promised blessings under those covenants. Other examples are the rainbow to Noah and circumcision to Abraham.

Having said this, we can identify several likely reasons why God chose tongues as the initial sign of the Spirit baptism:

- The tongue seems to be the most difficult member of the body to control. It is a small member, but it can direct, control, and defile the whole body (James 3:2-8).

“But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.” –James 3:8

Why does this matter? Because before someone receives the Holy Ghost, he must surrender his whole being to God – and the last member he surrenders is the tongue. When the entire being is surrendered to God, the Spirit enters and takes complete control, demonstrating His Lordship by using the unruliest member for His glory. Since the brain controls speech – but yet according to the study mentioned above, the part of the brain controlling willful activity and language is silent – this actually signifies that God has taken control of our center of consciousness, reasoning, and will – in short, the whole person.

- Speaking in tongues symbolizes the unity of the church. After the Flood, human beings persisted in disobeying God and tried to compete with Him by building the Tower of Babel. To stop their evil schemes and to scatter them, God gave them many languages instead of one (Gen. 11:1-9). Beginning with Pentecost, God in a sense reversed this process, taking people from many nations and uniting them into one spiritual family by the sign of tongues. The church contains people of every tribe, nation, and tongue, but they are all one through the language of the Spirit. Speaking in tongues becomes the new language associated with citizenship in the kingdom of God.
- Speaking in tongues is universal in application and a valid sign under any circumstances. Regardless of a people's nationality, language, or location, they can recognize speaking in tongues when it happens among them.

- Speaking in tongues provides certainty about one's experience with God since it signifies the baptism of the Spirit at a certain point in time. If one has repented, has been baptized in the name of Jesus, has received the Holy Ghost with the initial evidence of speaking in tongues, and continues to obey God's Word, he can know he is saved. The Lord provides the objective evidence of tongues to validate the Spirit-filling experience.

So, there are many reasons why we can infer God chose to use tongues as the initial sign of the Spirit baptism. But regardless of why He may have done so, what is perfectly clear to us is that from the evidence of the Acts accounts, it is definitely the sign that all new converts demonstrated when the Spirit entered. Speaking in tongues should be considered a normal and expected part of the believer's initial salvation experience, continued personal devotions, and personal prayer experiences in Spirit-filled congregational worship settings.

In the next section, we will look into Christian history and determine if the manifestation of tongues has been recorded throughout it.

The Manifestation Of Tongues In Church History

In this section, we will investigate the existence of the Holy Ghost baptism with tongues in church history and draw conclusions about the complete apostolic message throughout history. The words of “Encyclopedia Britannica” serve well as our central proposition:

“Post-apostolic instances of glossolalia (speaking in tongues) have been recorded throughout the history of the Christian church.”

-“Encyclopedia Britannica,” Vol. XIV, Art. “Pentecostal Churches,” Chicago: William Benton, 1976, p. 31.

Some of the quotes to follow specifically focus on tongues as a result of the Gift of Tongues, one of the 9 Gifts of the Spirit available to Spirit-filled believers (1 Cor. 12). Regardless, as we have learned, genuine speaking in tongues of any kind only comes as a result of Spirit-filling. Based on what we have established so far, we can safely infer that one who is exercising the Gift of Tongues also must have initially spoken in tongues as a sign of the Spirit infilling. So, for our purposes here, it is irrelevant whether the following examples focus on Holy Ghost tongues or the Gift of Tongues. The following jog through church history effectively proves that tongues have been reported throughout Christian history. Let’s begin...

-First and Second Centuries:

The post-apostolic fathers of the first two centuries believed in the gift of the Holy Spirit, practiced the laying on of hands to help receive the Spirit, and testified that the gifts of the Spirit, including

tongues, existed in their day (Heick, 1:47). For instance, the “Didache” says...

“For the Father desireth that the gifts be given to all” ...and also describes prophets who speak, “in the Spirit.”

-“Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics,” Vol. III, Art. “Charismata,” p. 371.

Irenaeus (130?-202? A.D.), Bishop of Lyons, taught the necessity of receiving the Spirit and specifically described speaking in tongues as evidence of the Spirit...

“The perfect man consists in the commingling and the union of the soul receiving the spirit of the Father... For this reason does the apostle declare, ‘We speak wisdom among them that are perfect,’ terming those persons ‘perfect’ who have received the Spirit of God, and who through the Spirit of God do speak in all languages, as he used himself also to speak. In like manner we do also hear many brethren in the Church, who possess prophetic gifts, and who through the Spirit speak all kinds of languages... whom also the apostle terms ‘spiritual,’ they being spiritual because they partake of the Spirit.”

-Irenaeus, “Against Heresies,” 5.6.1, in “The Ante-Nicene Fathers,” I, p. 531.

Celsus, a pagan critic, wrote near the end of the 2nd century that Christians in his day spoke in tongues. The theologian Origen, in his writing “Against Celsus,” preserved his testimony without denying the existence and validity of tongues, and accepted the gifts of the Spirit for his day.

-Origen, "Against Celsus," 7.9 in "The Ante-Nicene Fathers," IV, p. 614, quoting Celsus, "True Discourse."

-Origen, "Commentary on John," in "The Ante-Nicene Fathers," X, p. 329.

A group called the Montanists emphasized the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues (Bernard, p. 286). This group arose and flourished in the 2nd and 3rd century.

-Third Century:

Tertullian wrote against the heretic Marcion in the early 3rd century A.D. He specifically mentioned the gift of tongues and quoted 1 Corinthians 12:8-11 and Isaiah 28:11 as applicable in his day. He regarded speaking in tongues as one of the marks of a true church...

"Let Marcion then exhibit, as gifts of his god, some prophets, such as have not spoken by human sense, but with the Spirit of God... let him produce a psalm, a vision, a prayer – only let it be by the Spirit, in an ecstasy, that is, in a rapture, whenever an interpretation of tongues has occurred to him... Now all these signs (of spiritual gifts) are forthcoming from my side without any difficulty."

-Tertullian, "Against Marcion," 5.8, in "The Ante-Nicene Fathers," III, p. 446.

Novatian (died 257? A.D.), a presbyter in Rome, wrote the following about the Holy Spirit...

"This is He who places prophets in the Church, instructs teachers, directs tongues, gives powers and healings, does wonderful works, offers discrimination of spirits, affords powers of government, suggests counsels, and orders and arranges whatever other gifts

there are of charismata; and thus makes the Lord's Church everywhere, and in all, perfected and completed.”

-Novatian, “Treatise Concerning the Trinity,” 29, in “The Ante-Nicene Fathers,” V, p. 641.

-Fourth and Fifth Centuries:

Hilary (died 367 A.D.), Bishop of Poitiers, mentioned both tongues and interpretation of tongues, describing them as “agents of ministry” ordained of God.

-Hilary, “On the Trinity,” 8.33, in “The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers,” 2nd ser., IX, p. 147.

Ambrose (340-398 A.D.), Bishop of Milan, taught that all the gifts of 1 Corinthians 12 were part of the normal Christian experience.

-Ambrose, “Of the Holy Spirit,” 2.8, in “The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers,” 2nd ser., X, p. 134.

By the late 4th century and early 5th century, Christendom had for the most part evolved into what came to be known as the Roman Catholic Church. Apparently, speaking in tongues had practically disappeared from most places in the backsliding church, but the memory of it remained to some extent. For example, John Chrysostom (345-407 A.D.), Bishop of Constantinople, wrote a comment on 1 Corinthians 12...

“This whole place is very obscure: but the obscurity is produced by our ignorance of the facts referred to and by their cessation, being such as then used to occur but now no longer take place... Well: what did happen then? Whoever was baptized he straightway spoke with tongues... They at once on their baptism received the Spirit... began

to speak, one in the tongue of the Persians, another in that of the Romans, another in that of the Indians, or in some other language. And this disclosed to outsiders that it was the Spirit in the speaker.”

-John Chrysostom, “Homilies on First Corinthians,” 29, in “The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers,” 1st ser., XII, p. 168.

Augustine (354-430 A.D.) testified that the church in his day did not experience, nor expect to experience speaking in tongues, but admitted that this used to be the case...

“For the Holy Spirit is not only given by the laying on of hands amid the testimony of temporal sensible miracles, as He was given in former days... For who expects in these days that those on whom hands are laid that they may receive the Holy Spirit should forthwith begin to speak with tongues?”

-Augustine, “On Baptism,” 3.16.21, in “The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers,” 1st ser., IV, p. 443.

-The Medieval Age:

Evidence of tongues in medieval times is sparse, probably because the Roman Catholic Church was so effective in silencing so-called “heretics.” Nevertheless, there are reports of speaking in tongues among the following groups...

- Waldenses (1100’s), Europe.

-Carl Brumback, “What Meaneth This?” Springfield MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1947, p. 92.

The Waldenses were a group that rejected papal authority and attempted to base their beliefs solely on the Bible.

- Albigenses (1100's), Europe.

-Ibid.

The Albigenses were another group that rejected papal authority and emphasized purity of life.

- Franciscans and possibly other mendicant orders (1200's), Europe.

-“Smith's Dictionary of the Bible,” Vol. IV, Art. “Tongues, Gift of,” ed. H.B. Hackett, 1870; Rpt. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1971, pp. 3310-11.

These were Catholic monks who embraced a very simple lifestyle and traveled throughout the countryside preaching.

-The Reformation Era Forward:

Reports of speaking in tongues increase greatly after the Protestant Reformation, due to several factors...

- Greater religious freedom
- Renewed emphasis on Bible study, apostolic doctrine, conversion, and spiritual experiences
- The invention of printing

According to respected historians, speaking in tongues has occurred among many groups during this period (from 1500 to 1900), including the following...

- Anabaptists (1500's), Europe.

-Michael Hamilton, "The Charismatic Movement," Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975, pp. 73-74.

-"Encyclopedia Britannica," Vol. XIV, Art. "Pentecostal Churches," p. 31.

Anabaptists were one of the four main branches of the early Protestant movement (along with Lutherans, Reformed, and Anglicans). Unlike other Protestants, the Anabaptists emphasized the restoration of apostolic patterns of worship and lifestyle, the importance of a conversion experience, baptism of believers only, baptism by immersion, total separation of church and state, the power to overcome sin after conversion, and the need to live a holy life.

A prominent Anabaptist leader named Menno Simons, whose followers became known as Mennonites, wrote about speaking in tongues as if it was expected evidence of receiving the Holy Ghost.

-Hamilton, p. 74.

Many early Anabaptists worshipped quite demonstratively; in the words of a secular history text, some participated in...

“very excited, ‘enthusiastic,’ evangelical practices... what Americans know as ‘holy rolling’... The congregation sometimes shouted and danced, and always sang hymns with great fervor.”

-Crane Brinton et al., “A History of Civilization,” 3rd ed., Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1967, Vol. 1, pp. 472, 480.

In view of their doctrine and worship, it is not at all surprising that speaking in tongues occurred among early Anabaptists.

- Prophecy Movement (1500’s), England.

-“Smith’s Dictionary of the Bible,” Vol. IV, Art. “Tongues, Gift of,” pp. 3310-11.

- Camisards (1600’s-1700’s), Southern France.

-Ibid.

-“Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics,” Vol. III, Art. “Camisards,” pp. 175-176.

This group was often referred to as the “Prophets of the Cevennes.” They were a group of Huguenots (French Protestants), mostly peasants, who resisted the attempts of Louis XIV’s government to convert them to Roman Catholicism. Many were imprisoned, tortured, and martyred. Observers reported tongues; uneducated peasants and young children prophesying in pure, elegant French; enthusiastic, demonstrative worship; and people “seized by the Spirit.”

- Quakers (1600’s), England.

-Bloesch, II, pp. 115-116.

-“Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics,” Art. “Charismata,” III, p. 370.

The Quakers were a group that emphasized spiritual experience and waited on the moving of the Spirit in their services. The early Quakers received their name because they literally “quaked” under the power of the Spirit.

- Jansenists (1600’s-1700’s), France.

-“Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics,” Art. “Charismata,” III, p. 370.

-“Encyclopedia Britannica,” Art. “Pentecostal Churches,” XIV, p. 31.

The Jansenists were a Catholic reform movement.

- Pietists (including Moravians) (Late 1600’s), Germany.

-Bloesch, II, pp. 115-116.

-Hamilton, p. 77.

The Pietists emphasized spiritual experience and Christian living.

- Converts of Camisards (Early 1700’s), England.

-“Smith’s Dictionary of the Bible,” Art. “Tongues, Gift of,” IV, pp. 3310-11.

Some Camisards fled to England to avoid persecution, making converts there.

- Methodists (1700’s), England and America.

-ibid.

Tongues took place particularly in the revivals of evangelists John Wesley and George Whitefield. Wesley himself, who was the founder of Methodism, believed that the Gifts of the Spirit had practically disappeared but that a fully restored church would have them again.

-Howard Snyder, "The Radical Wesley," Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1980, p. 96.

In reply to the objection that tongues did not exist in his time, Wesley replied...

"It has been heard of more than once, no farther off than the valleys of Dauphiny" (Southern France).

-John Wesley, "A Letter to the Reverend Dr. Conyers Middleton," in "The Works of John Wesley," 3rd. ed., Rpt. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978, Vol. X, pp. 54-55.

We should also note the strong emphasis on repentance and physical demonstrations in the Methodist revivals. One hostile historian wrote...

"Extreme emotional disturbances, ecstasies and bodily seizures of various sorts were common in the Wesleyan Revival of the eighteenth century in England..." He records that people in Wesley's meetings exhibited, "violent motor reactions... convulsions and shakings" and screaming.

-Elmer Clark, "The Small Sects in America," Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1937, pp. 111-112.

Similar phenomena occurred in the Great Awakening, a period of American revival in the 1700's led by Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, and others.

-Ibid., pp. 112-113.

- Revivals and Camp Meetings (1800's), America.

It is reported that physical demonstrations occurred in later American revivals, called the Second Great Awakening, which began with camp meetings in Kentucky and swept across the American frontier.

-Ibid., pp. 114-117.

Observers at various American revival meetings reported sobbing, shrieking, shouting, spasms, falling, rolling, running, dancing, whole congregations breathing in distress and weeping, and hundreds under conviction on the ground repenting.

-William Sweet, "The Story of Religion in America," Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1950, pp. 133, 227-231.

These meetings were conducted by Methodists, Baptists, some Presbyterians, and later the Holiness movement. With such strong emphasis on repentance and free, demonstrative worship, it is not surprising that many people received the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues.

A great revival swept the University of Georgia in 1800-1801, and the students “shouted and talked in unknown tongues.”

-Vinson Synan, “The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United States,” Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971, p. 25, quoting E. Merlton Coulter, “College Life in the Old South,” New York, 1928, pp. 194-195.

In many cases tongues speaking went unreported because observers did not recognize it or its significance and did not distinguish it from other physical phenomena. One historian said...

“Throughout the nineteenth century speaking in unknown tongues occurred occasionally in the revivals and camp meetings that dotted the countryside. Perhaps the phenomenon was considered just another of the many evidences that one had been saved or sanctified.”

-*ibid.*, pp. 25, 29.

- Lutherans (Early 1800's), Germany.

-Hamilton, pp. 84-85.

This began among followers of Gustav von Below. The von Below family owned several estates in Pomerania, including Gatz, where Gustav was born, and Reddentin where he died. Like most male members of his family and social class, he joined the Prussian Army. However, many of the military aristocracy from Pomerania reacted against the luxuriousness of court life in Berlin after the Napoleonic Wars and became deeply religious, under the influence of Pietism, which was especially strong in this part of the Kingdom of Prussia.

In 1817 Gustav began to experience speaking in tongues. His brothers Karl and Heinrich began to have similar experiences, and they jointly devoted their estate at Reddentin to prayer meetings, open to noble and commoner alike.

Many Prussian officials of high importance were drawn to these meetings at Reddentin or elsewhere, including the young Otto von Bismarck, and the von Gerlach brothers, one of whom was the king's closest friend. The Evangelical Church in Prussia was somewhat suspicious of these phenomena, and those experiencing them were temporarily separated from the main church until an Evangelical investigatory commission found them to be "of God."

- Irvingites (1800's), England and America.

-“Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics,” Vol. VII, Art. “Irving and the Catholic Apostolic Churches,” pp. 422-425.

The Spirit fell among the London congregation of a prominent Church of Scotland pastor named Edward Irving, beginning with Mary Campbell and James and Margaret McDonald. Soon after, Irvingites formed the Catholic Apostolic Church, which emphasized the Gifts of the Spirit. This revival also gave birth to the Christian Catholic Church and the New Apostolic Church, and there were also Irvingites in the traditional denominations. Unfortunately, these groups gradually lost the Gifts of the Spirit, degenerated into ritualism, suffered rapid decline, and are almost nonexistent today. Church historian Philip Schaff

(1819-1893) wrote of observing speaking in tongues in an Irvingite church in New York...

“Several years ago I witness this phenomenon in an Irvingite congregation in New York; the words were broken, ejaculatory, and unintelligible, but uttered in abnormal, startling, and impressive sounds, in a state of apparent unconsciousness and rapture, and without any control over the tongue, which was seized as it were by a foreign power. A friend and colleague (Dr. Briggs), who witnessed it in 1879 in the principal Irvingite church in London, received the same impression.”

-Philip Schaff, “History of the Christian Church,” 3rd. ed., 1890, Rpt. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958, p. 115.

- Plymouth Brethren (1800’s), England.

-Bloesch, 1, pp. 115-116.

- Readers (Lasare) (1841-1843), Sweden.

-“Smith’s Dictionary of the Bible,” Art. “Tongues, Gift of,” IV, p. 3310-11.

-Schaff, 1, p. 114.

- Revivals (1859), Ireland.

-ibid.

- Holiness people (1800’s), Tennessee and North Carolina.

-“Encyclopedia Britannica,” Art. “Pentecostal Churches,” XIV, p. 31.

-Twentieth Century:

The modern Pentecostal movement began on January 1, 1901, in a small Bible college in Topeka, Kansas, operated by Charles Parham, a minister with a background in the Holiness movement. The students began to seek the baptism of the Spirit, understanding tongues as the initial evidence. Agnes Ozman was the first student to receive the Holy Ghost and manifest speaking in tongues. The revival soon spread to many denominations and around the world. Since then, speaking in tongues is commonplace and expected in many Pentecostal churches, and has been verified and documented repeatedly.

-Robert Dalton, "Tongues Like as of Fire," Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1945.

-Frank Ewart, "The Phenomenon of Pentecost," rev. ed., Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press, 1975, pp. 59-93.

-Stanley Frodsham, "With Signs Following," Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1941.

-Conclusion:

As the history of the Christian faith can clearly attest, the manifestation of speaking in tongues has been pervasive throughout the existence of the church. In the beginning, it was mainstream and expected. However, as the church began to turn away from its foundation of truth, this manifestation started to disappear from the mainstream. Through the times that were dominated by Roman Catholic doctrine – which silenced all opposition – tongues all but vanished. But we can see from the record of history that with the return of free and expressive worship and with an emphasis on

returning to Biblical truth, the manifestation of tongues began to reemerge.

The New Birth: Parallels Between The Spiritual And The Natural

As we have already seen from Scripture, the new birth gospel plan of salvation involves repentance, water baptism, and receiving the Holy Ghost. It is vital now to understand that this remarkable plan the Lord has established through His death, burial and resurrection, is in every way a literal new birth! It is a life-altering experience in the life of a believer, fully designed to enable the convert to begin to walk effectively with Jesus. The salvation plan is not simply a checklist that must be completed, but rather is a functional experience that elevates the individual to be able to become a new creature in Christ!

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”

-2 Corinthians 5:17

The Bible makes it clear that when you undergo this plan, a literal creative event takes place in your life. You are not the same person, but are elevated above the old man. You now have the power and authority to overcome sin and the shackles of this present world by the name of Jesus and the Holy Ghost working inside of you. It is interesting that in the Old Testament, followers of God were always called “servants of God,” while angels were called “sons of God.” In the New Testament, this is turned around and the believers are stated as being adopted into sonship!

“Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,”

–Ephesians 1:5

“Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.” –Galatians 4:7

“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”

–1 John 3:1-2

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.”

–Romans 8:14-17

As we become partakers in this salvation experience with the Lord, it is critical to understand that the purpose of your creation is to know God and become like Him through relationship, with your ultimate destiny to become the bride of Christ in the world to come. But because of our fallen state, that was not possible. Sin separates us from God. You must recognize that salvation (the gospel “new birth”

plan) is simply the mechanism that God uses in order to cause us to be drawn back to Him and become redeemed in order that we may be able to fulfill the purpose of our creation!

How then do we become like Him? What does that mean? It means that as you spend time with Him in prayer and living every day with Him, you begin to know Him better. You can only love Him to the degree that you know Him. In knowing Him, you then begin to think like Him and become like Him. You take on His attributes, His purpose, and His character. Rather than embracing and embodying evil and submitting to the sinful works of your own flesh (the self-serving part of you that seeks to do its own will rather than following God), you instead embody the wholesome and pure things of God.

In fact, we need to identify one important aspect of water baptism before we move on. As stated earlier, the purpose of baptism is to become buried with Christ, to take on His name, and to have your sins washed away. However, there is an additional depth of understanding that you should arrive at. There is a substance that the baptism is designed to give you that you must begin to move into as you come to know the Lord. Let's look at what it truly means to be "baptized into Jesus' name."

As mentioned earlier, the Greek word for baptize is "baptizo" (Strong's #G907), and means, "to immerse or submerge."

-<https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/baptizo.html> (Retrieved 3/02/18)

In the Bible, we can say that the term “name” – when used referring to God – implies more than just a label. It refers to His character, His identity, His purpose, and His majesty.

-https://www.blueletterbible.org/study/misc/name_god.cfm (Retrieved 3/10/18)

-<https://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/god-names-of/> (Retrieved 3/10/18)

So then, we should recognize that to be baptized into Jesus’ name really means you are being immersed and submerged into Jesus’ character, identity, purpose and majesty. That is the substance of what the baptism was designed to do. Far from just being an outward ritual, the purpose of baptism is the act of wholly plunging you into a totally new life. This understanding has seemingly endless practical application.

For example, when you are truly baptized into His character, you can no longer embody a sinful character. When you are truly baptized into His identity, you can no longer live with ungodly mentalities such as low self-esteem or pride. When you are truly baptized into His purpose, you can no longer simply pursue your own purpose and agenda - or be disappointed when things don’t go according to your purpose and agenda. When you are truly baptized into His majesty, you can no longer bow your will to Satan and involve yourself in the beggarly elements of the world.

There are many other specific applications you should prayerfully explore, but we have provided these as examples. The fullness of this meaning does not necessarily come into being in a person’s character and conduct instantaneously at the moment of baptism. However, we

should recognize that being transformed in this way is the objective as you go forward in God. It is the desire of God that you not only have the symbol of physical water baptism, but also that you move into the substance of what it was designed to give you! So, we can see that the new birth of water and spirit is designed to not only be symbolic, but functional. This is a new birth in every way.

We now need to explore in more depth the new birth in terms of understanding how it correlates with actual physical birth. You must recognize that the natural is designed to parallel the spiritual. The things of God are orderly, sensible and functional. Salvation is exactly that. In order to fully understand the spiritual new birth, you must first understand the natural, physical birth. The human birthing process can be separated into three events:

1. Conception in the womb
2. The fetus in the sack of water/blood (amniotic sac/fluid)
3. Birth

You must recognize that when you undergo repentance, water baptism, and receiving the Holy Ghost, you have just undergone a spiritual new birth that perfectly parallels with natural, physical birth! Let's explore this deeper...

To start with, we need to lay the foundation for the new birth by going back to the words of Jesus. This idiom of birth in connection with a coming New Covenant salvation plan was introduced by Jesus,

who began to reveal this new birth of water and spirit in His conversation with Nicodemus. Jesus declares that we must be born again...

“There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:

The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?

Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.”

—John 3:1-7

Nicodemus asked Jesus how a man could enter into his mother's womb a second time and be born again. Jesus explained that He meant the birth of water and Spirit, that is, not a second physical birth but an experience that would impart new life spiritually. Nicodemus did not understand this statement either, for he asked, “How can these things be?” (John 3:9). Jesus in turn expressed astonishment that a religious scholar and leader like Nicodemus could not understand what He meant! Christ's doctrine of the new birth

should not have been totally strange to the Jews. He built upon the New Covenant promise that was prophesied of in Ezekiel 36:25-26...

“Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.

“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.” –Ezekiel 36:25-26

Back in the Old Testament, the prophet Ezekiel refers to water and spirit as being a part of a future new birth experience. The purification with water and receiving of a new heart through the Spirit is a classic Old Testament representation of the new birth, which would one day be poured out, beginning with the Jews. Ezekiel also mentions this promise in Chapter 11:19 and 18:31. Jesus' new birth command in here in John 3, anticipates the near-term fulfillment of these promises, which would soon happen on Pentecost. However, Israel as a nation will receive the far-term fulfillment of this in the Millennial Kingdom. Any Jew familiar with the Scriptures should have understood Jesus' reference to a new birth represented by a new heart involving the themes of water and spirit.

So, it should not surprise us then to see the Lord speak of these things and compare it to physical birth. Notice that Jesus declared it necessary to be born of water and of the Spirit. So, the new birth as described by Jesus actually includes two components, water and Spirit. This is later restated again by Paul in Titus 3:5 (“...he saved us, by the washing of regeneration (water), and renewing of the Holy Ghost (Spirit).”). Of course, repentance is a prerequisite to the new

birth. In other words, you must die to your old man before experiencing the birth of the new man. Let's examine this concept more closely and recognize the amazing parallels between spiritual and physical birth...

1. Conception in the womb: Repentance

- the new birth experience requires a change of mind/direction. Repentance accomplishes this, and motivates the individual to move towards the new birth experience. This is represented physically, by conception in the womb. Repentance is both a death to the old man and simultaneously, the conception of a new man. Repentance begins the individual out on a journey towards a new birth! In human reproduction, conception is caused by an egg, or ovum, being fertilized by a sperm cell. The Bible uses the word "seed" in reference to this. You might say repentance is the fertilized seed of conception in the womb of the church. True repentance as we saw earlier in our study, only comes from God and His Word. Therefore, the true origin of the seed of repentance is the Word of God. Scripture confirms this understanding of conception, and again reinforces this same symbolism with natural birth in 1 Peter, describing the believer being "born again, not of corruptible seed (physical conception), but of incorruptible, by the Word of God." So, Scripture declares that the origin of the seed that brings about conception (or repentance) is the Word (1 Peter 1:23; Luke 8:11).

2. The fetus in the sack of water/blood (amniotic sac/fluid): Baptism

- As the human fetus is developing in the womb, it is completely submerged in what is known as amniotic fluid. Interestingly, this fluid is generated from maternal plasma, which is a component of blood. Though we understand the blood of Jesus to be symbolically applied to our lives throughout the new birth experience, it is interesting that in the natural it shows up here! The amniotic fluid nourishes the developing fetus and allows it to grow (typifying the new believer being nourished, or disciplined in the church, which is the “mother” dimension). The fetus is immersed in this fluid until birth, when the “water breaks.” This experience of immersion and “water breaking” parallels with baptism, as the new convert is completely immersed under the waters of baptism, to then come up out of the water (breaking the water), and rise to new life in Christ!

3. Birth: The Holy Ghost

- Upon delivery, the culmination of the birthing process occurs when the baby takes its first breath! Some babies are birthed stillborn and never have this experience. However, the surgical team performing the delivery immediately looks for the exchange of air, the breath, the noise coming from the baby’s mouth (crying) in order to validate the baby has been birthed successfully. Just as a newborn baby will manifest new life through noise coming from its mouth, the

newly “born again” believer will initially manifest new life in Christ by the verbal, audible sign of the infilling of the Holy Ghost! Speaking in other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance initially evidences the baptism of the Holy Spirit! The Greek word used for spirit is “pneuma” (Strong’s G4151), and literally means “wind or breath.”

-<https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/kjv/pneuma.html> (Retrieved 3/15/18)

So, the baby’s first breath as a newly-birthed person correlates to the first “breath” of the newly-Spirit-birthed person as the pneuma – or Spirit – manifests through the sign of tongues.

So, as we have detailed throughout this study, the Bible makes it very clear to us that the gospel plan of repentance, baptism, and receiving the Holy Ghost is in every way an actual spiritual new birth – perfectly paralleling the natural birth. When we undergo this transformative process that Christ made possible for us, we should expect to be completely changed in every way from the former man.

Before closing this section, we need to recognize that the central passage used here – John Chapter 3 – has been a passage often misunderstood by mainstream Christian denominations. Let’s take a moment to try to clear up some of the misunderstandings regarding this passage.

Let’s refer back to the subject of the new birth as described by Jesus in John 3. It is important to point out that there is a common objection to the understanding that John 3:5 refers to the new birth baptism of

water and Spirit. This objection asserts that the phrase “born of water and of the Spirit” in Verse 5 creates a dichotomy with “water” referring to natural birth and “Spirit” referring to spiritual birth. Adherents to this view use this interpretation to promote a belief that Jesus is not advocating for water baptism in this passage, therefore making water baptism not a part of the new birth spoken of here.

In Chapter 4 of “The New Birth,” theologian David K. Bernard outlines a lengthy list of reasons showing why this view is incorrect – and we encourage you to explore this further if you are interested.

-Bernard, “The New Birth,” pp. 87-103.

While we obviously agree and strongly emphasize that the new birth concept is metaphorical of physical birth, it is incorrect to claim that being “born of water” refers only and specifically to physical birth and being “born of the Spirit” refers only and specifically to spiritual birth. Rather, the deeper understanding in view here is that the physical birth and the spiritual birth both involve “water” and “spirit” components, as well as a “voice” or “sound” component. Interestingly, whenever a particular Scriptural view is proven incorrect, it is often due to the reader not taking the Biblical text literally enough!

Plenty of even mainstream Christian commentaries agree that Jesus was speaking of a new birth consisting of two components. For example, The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries says...

“In light of the reference to the practice by Jesus of water baptism in Verse 22, it is difficult to avoid construing the words ‘of water and of the Spirit’ conjunctively, and regarding them as a description of Christian baptism, in which cleansing and endowment are both

essential elements.”

-R.V.G. Tasker, “The Gospel According to St. John,” Vol. IV of “The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries,” Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960, p. 71.

So, we can understand that Jesus spoke of a new birth of water and Spirit components that both paralleled with natural birth, as we described earlier.

We must also stress that the new birth is a single whole. One is either born or not born; there is no such thing as being half-born. Although Jesus identified two components – water and Spirit – He nevertheless spoke of one birth. The Spirit, water, and blood all agree in one (1 John 5:8). There is only one baptism (Ephesians 4:5), comprised of both water and Spirit. The Scripture encompasses both water baptism and Spirit baptism when it teaches that we are buried with Christ in baptism to then rise in newness of life (Romans 6:3-4), that we are baptized into Christ (Galatians 3:27), and that we receive spiritual circumcision by baptism (Colossians 2:11-13). Whatever repentance, water baptism, and the Spirit baptism accomplish individually, we must always remember that the total work of initial salvation is completed at the union of the three. We should never attach so much importance to one baptism element that we deem the other to be unnecessary.

Man, Made In God's Image

Although we have already discussed man being made in God's image in some depth much earlier in our study by comparing the three main manifestations of God to the three components of man, we will now seek to uncover another layer of understanding concerning this topic. To truly understand the gospel plan of salvation, you must recognize that this incredible salvation plan of repentance, baptism, and the Holy Ghost is designed to affect your tripartite being on all three levels (body, soul, and spirit). The three main manifestations of God, tripartite man, and the plan of salvation come together to parallel each other in some truly remarkable ways, demonstrating the unique precision of God. Let's investigate this concept further...

First, we are told in the Bible that we are made in the image of God...

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.”

–Genesis 1:27

What exactly does that mean? Biblically, it is not just that we “look like Him,” or have a similar body shape or form. Though in some ways that may be part of it, being made in His image is much deeper than that. We have examined this subject in several different layers of understanding in previous sections entitled [Understanding Man In The Image Of God - Body, Soul And Spirit](#) (page 118), and [Is “Elohim” In Genesis 1:26 Plural? Does That Prove A Trinity?](#) (page 132).

As humans, we, while in the flesh, are spiritual beings trapped inside a physical body. So, it can be said that while in our human bodies, we are fundamentally physical beings. From Scripture, we understand God to be fundamentally a spirit being...

“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” –John 4:24

“Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:” –Colossians 1:15

So, we understand that God is a spirit. Being a spirit, He is therefore invisible in this form to the physical human eye.

Some question why the Bible sometimes speaks of God as if He has a body. For example, Isaiah 59:1 mentions God’s “hand” and “ear.” 2 Chronicles 16:9 speaks of God’s “eyes.” Matthew 4:4 puts words in God’s “mouth.” In Deuteronomy 33:27, God has “arms.” All of these verses are examples of anthropomorphism - a literary method of describing God with human anatomical or emotional terms so that humans can better understand Him. The use of anthropomorphism, a form of figurative language, does not imply that God has an actual body.

We have seen from our earlier study on the nature of God, that He has revealed Himself to man in a number of ways. Three major ways in which He has revealed Himself are:

- Father

- Son
- Holy Ghost

In the same way, human beings can also be categorized into three major components:

- Spirit
- Body
- Soul

Scripture actually confirms this threefold division in 1 Thessalonians...

“And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” -1 Thessalonians 5:23

Furthermore, the following passage from Hebrews tells us that although soul and spirit are connected in many ways, they are distinct.

“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” -Hebrews 4:12

Let's talk about these three divisions of man in order to better understand each...

-Spirit:

Hebrew: “ruwach” – Strong’s #H7307

Greek: “pneuma” – Strong’s #G4151

A person’s spirit and soul are the two parts that live on eternally. In the natural, your spirit is considered to be the seat of your conscience, your intuition, and that which enables your ability to commune with spiritual beings. When you receive the Holy Ghost, it acts as an upgrade to your human spirit. With the indwelling Holy Ghost (the Spirit of Jesus), you are able to have access to the supernatural in a way not possible before. There are nine supernatural Gifts of the Spirit that become available only to one who has received the Holy Ghost. When you learn to become in tune with God’s Spirit, you can perceive things in the Spirit that your natural body cannot.

So, your spirit is the dwelling place of the Holy Ghost. However, Satan also can gain access to the human spirit. The Bible continually refers to demonic possession as being a reality. There are certain ways in which people can open themselves up to having their spirits corrupted by, or even indwelt by evil spirits. This is why the consecrated Christian is recommended to stay away from certain activities, events, and lifestyles – especially practices related to the occult. When not guarding against it, evil can affect your spirit negatively, even if you have the Holy Ghost. However, if you have the Holy Ghost and are living consecrated, an evil spirit cannot possess you. In fact, part of the purpose of having the Holy Ghost is to give you power and authority over them!

-Body:

Greek: "soma" – Strong's #G4983

The body is the physical vessel or shell that houses the spirit and the soul. Aside from its spectacular design, there is nothing supernatural about it. Rather, because of the Fall of Man in Genesis, it is a corruptible body that is bound to decay and death. Our physical bodies are the tools by which we interface with the physical world around us. Unfortunately, many people only believe in the existence of the physical, and deny the supernatural world. This causes them to elevate their carnal (fleshly, natural) senses to become their primary guiding force in life. The Bible cautions the believer not to follow this route, but to instead be guided by the Holy Spirit.

The knowledgeable believer understands that his true citizenship is not of this physical "reality" we currently are temporarily stuck in, but has an origin and a future in the supernatural realm. Scripture teaches us that we will one day receive glorified bodies as the physical is done away with.

The true understanding of our current state is that we are supernatural beings trapped inside a physical body, and should thus aim our allegiance and attention to God rather than man and self. Scripture tells Holy Ghost filled believers to honor and take care of our bodies, as they act as the dwelling place of the Holy Ghost. However, we must primarily focus on the spiritual, as we understand the physical to be temporary, but the spiritual eternal.

-Soul:

Hebrew: “nephesh” – Strong’s #H5315

Greek: “psuche” – Strong’s #G5590

At the outset, we should acknowledge that in the Bible, the usages of soul and spirit sometimes overlap. They are certainly distinct (Hebrews 4:12), but yet they do seem to have some similarities. The soul is the seat of the mind, the will, and the emotions. The soul is our natural and inner self, which is sinful (Romans 3:23). It is the “who we are” and identifies our personality. When a Christian is lead about by his emotions and by what he feels in the flesh, he may be called a “soulish” Christian. These kinds of people are easily misled by their desires, and conduct their lives in a way that pleases their carnal mind (Romans 8:7; James 1:15).

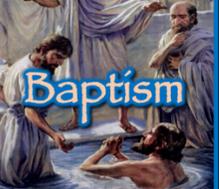
The soul is also the interface between the physical and the spiritual. Our soul can allow our spirit man to operate or interact with the natural realm and vice versa. Desires originate from our soul – ones such as happiness, love and curiosity, sinful ones such as lust, malice and pride, as well as holy desires such as forgiveness, purity of mind, and hunger for God’s Word.

The Holy Ghost can influence our soul through our spirit if we are walking with God. The influencing of our soul and spirit will affect what we then do in the physical. This is why believers who undergo the gospel plan of salvation often describe having such astonishingly changed lives. When you walk closely with Jesus, the Holy Ghost begins to act upon your mind, will, and emotions in order to change

them for the better. The end result is that many of the things you once loved, you now hate, and vice versa. You become truly a different person.

The Fruit of the Spirit also reside within the soul, and develop there as we mature in Christ. The Fruit of the Spirit are not supernatural things like the Gifts of the Spirit, but instead are part of the evidence of a born-again life. They are not bestowed in a completed form suddenly, but rather we must put forth effort, prayer, and action to grow this fruit in our lives as we become more like Jesus.

Let's now put together what we have learned in order to gain deeper understandings of God, ourselves, and the plan of salvation...

	God	Man	Salvation
"Ruwach" "Pneuma"			
"Soma"			
"Nephesh" "Psuche"			

God Man Salvation

- Father – Spirit – Holy Ghost

-We have already seen that the Bible describes God as being a Father and lists His true essence as being spirit. Man is like God in this way, because though he is trapped in a physical body, God created him also with an eternal spirit. The Holy Ghost is the part of salvation that specifically corresponds to Father in terms of God, and Spirit in terms of man, because it acts as an upgrade to our human spirit, which makes us a new creation in God!

- Son – Body – Baptism

-In order to die for man as the necessary kinsman Redeemer, God had to come in a body of flesh in order to be crucified. You cannot crucify a spirit being. Therefore, He became physical like us in order to die for us, to then enable us to become like Him! This is the reason He manifested Himself as a Son. The body is the outward physical shell, in which God manifested Himself to complete the work of redemption. Baptism is the only part of the salvation plan that is represented by something physical. You must submit to this part of the new birth out of obedience, which is represented by your physical body being washed in the physical waters of baptism. Jesus the Son of God Himself, as an example to us in the physical, was baptized in water as well.

- Holy Ghost – Soul – Repentance

-The Holy Ghost is the mode by which God interfaces with our souls. The Holy Ghost moves upon your mind, will and emotions (the soul). This is what leads men to repentance, which can be defined as a change of the mind, will, and emotions. The Christian is then indwelt and becomes a new creation as the Holy Ghost which resides in the spirit, cleans out our soul (mind, etc.), convicts us of sin, and replaces our evil desires with holy ones. Whatever resides in the spirit and in the soul, whether good or evil, has a direct affect upon the other.

So, we can see from Scripture how man is truly made in the image of God! Just as God has manifested Himself in three main ways towards us, we are also comprised of three components that make us who we are, which directly correlate to the components of God. (Notice, though we are composed of three parts, we are still one person, just as God is!) Furthermore, the plan of God to draw men back to Him (the gospel plan of salvation), not only correlates to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, but also is specifically designed to affect tri-partite man in all three ways: body, soul and spirit! Truly, only God could have come up with such a plan of redemption that touches us in all three dimensions, making us new creatures on every level possible!

Conclusion

As we bring our study of the nature of God and the gospel plan of salvation to a close, we must at this time look at ourselves in perfect honesty and evaluate where we stand in relation to the concepts discussed. Have we ensured that our understanding of the nature and identity of God is founded upon Scripture, or have we permitted man's tradition to influence us? Have we not only mentally believed, but more importantly, obeyed the gospel plan detailed in Scripture?

As we stressed earlier, it is not sufficient to only believe in terms of an intellectual or mental assent. The true believer allows his belief to propel him into action (obedience)! It is astonishing to recognize the lengths that God has gone to in order to allow us to know Him personally! We urge every person who goes through this study to keep that in mind on a daily basis.

We encourage you not to let anything deter you or hold you back from truth and the fulfillment of the Biblical salvation pattern as you continue on your journey to know the Lord Jesus and experience Him for yourself. May God bless you in Jesus' name!

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