

God in Three Persons

INTRODUCTION.

- A. One of the earliest controversies to erupt in early Christianity centered around the Trinity.
 - 1. The basic question boiled down to this: "If there is but one God and Christ is God, what is the relationship of Christ to the Father?"
 - 2. Early Christians answered that question in a variety of ways, and some were fairly close to the truth and some were heretics.
- B. This evening, we do not want to rehash that historical question; we will not focus on how the church has answered the Trinitarian question throughout the centuries.
 - 1. Rather we want to focus upon the biblical truth of the Trinity.
 - 2. Let us see what the Bible has to say.

GOD IS ONE.

- A. Central to Christianity is the belief that God is one.
 - 1. The OT strongly affirms monotheism.
 - a. Deut 6:4.
 - b. Ps 83:18.
 - c. Is 43:10.
 - d. The OT writers had to confront the polytheism of the nations around them.
 - 1) In juxtaposition to the many heathen ideas of God, the OT writers affirm that God is simply one; there is not a multiplicity of gods.
 - 2) There is no room in Judaism for a multiplicity of gods.
 - 2. The NT strongly affirmed monotheism.
 - a. Mk 12:29.
 - b. 1 Cor 8:16.
 - c. 1 Tm 2:5.
 - d. Js 2:19.
- B. We Christians believe in only one God.
 - 1. We are not tritheist — those who attempt to make the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit three separate gods. "
 - 2. However, just as the OT affirmed there is one God, the NT affirmed that there is but one God, and we accept the inspired testimony of God's being one.

GOD IS THREE.

- A. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are each referred to as God.
 - 1. The Father is called God.
 - a. Gal 1:1.
 - b. Eph 4:4-6.
 - 2. The Son is called God.
 - a. Jn 1:1.
 - b. Jn 20:28.
 - 1) Some say that we can't use Thomas' statement as an affirmation of Jesus' deity; after all, Thomas has not yet been guided into all truth.
 - 2) But, carefully notice what Jesus says at v 29—Jesus says, "Thomas, you believe. You might believe because you saw me, but you do believe."
 - 3. The Holy Spirit is called Lord.

- a. The NT on a couple of occasions refers to the Holy Spirit as God.
 - 1) Acts 5:3-4.
 - 2) 1 Cor 3:16.
 - b. The Scriptures also use attributes of One who must be divine to describe the Holy Spirit.
 - 1) The Spirit is omnipresent: Ps 139:7.
 - 2) The Spirit is a lawgiver: Rm 8:2.
 - 3) The Spirit would guide the Apostles into all truth: Jn 16:13.
 - c. The Holy Spirit does divine work.
 - 1) He is the One through whom we are born again: Jn 3:8.
 - 2) He is the One through whom we shall be resurrected: Rm 8:11.
 - 3) The Spirit was active in Creation: Gn 1:2.
- B. There is perfect unity in God.
- 1. Jesus & the Father are one (Jn 10:30).
 - 2. Mt 28:19.
 - 3. 2 Cor 13:14.
- C. This is, admittedly, quite difficult to understand. How is it that God can be both one and three at the same time?
- 1. Tertullian, an early Christian writer, said of the Trinity, "Try to understand it and you will lose your mind; deny it and you will lose your soul"
 - 2. I am persuaded the reason we have such great difficulty understanding the Trinity is that we are finite and God is infinite.
 - a. God is Spirit (Jn 4:24).
 - b. Although we have an eternal soul as God does, we are presently confined to our bodies.
 - 1) Everything we see, everything we experience is physical.
 - 2) But, God because he is spirit is not bound to our physical limitations and experience.
 - 3. There are several analogies man has used to attempt to explain the Trinity.
 - a. We can use the analogy of a woman — she might be a wife, a mother, and a woman.
 - b. Water can take three forms — cloud, rain, and mist.
 - c. An egg has a shell, white, and yoke.
 - d. We must understand, however, that our analogies are woefully inadequate to explain God. If we could fit God into a little box and fully explain him, would he still be God?

CONCLUSION.

- A. We have failed, and men will fail in the future to come to an adequate understanding of the Trinity. So why bother?
- 1. This is the God we worship, and we need to try to understand something about him.
 - a. We have been instructed to worship the Lord.
 - 1) Ps 29:2.
 - 2) Ps 96:9.
 - b. If we do not understand something about God's nature, how can we "ascribe to the LORD the glory of his name"?
 - 1) In an extreme case, this could lead to our worshiping like the Athenians with their altar "TO THE UNKNOWN GOD."
 - 2) Although that is an extreme position, we do need to know as much about God as possible so that we can give him the worship due him.
 - 2. There are many errors taught concerning the Trinity.
 - a. On the one hand, we have the Unitarian view.
 - 1) They hold that there is no distinction in the Trinity — they believe there is just one person in the Trinity.

- a) That simply cannot be.
- b) An abundance of Scriptures demonstrate that there is a distinction between Father, Son and Spirit.
- 2) Notice just one — Mt. 3: 13-17 — you clearly have Father, Son, and Spirit.
- b. On the other hand, we have the Jehovah's Witness position that denies the deity of the Son.
 - 1) They claim that Jesus is not eternal, he is a created being, and he is not divine.
 - 2) But, notice Heb. 1:8 — "But of the Son he says, 'Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever, the righteous scepter is the scepter of thy kingdom.'" The Father calls the Son "God."
- B. The whole point of this sermon has been to understand God.
 - 1. If we do not understand him, we cannot respond to him.
 - 2. Have you responded as you ought?