

TOPIC II

THE TRINITY - OR IS IT THE FAMILY?

If one wants to get into a great deal of trouble, one can question the validity of the idea that God is a "triune being" a "Trinity" if you would. This doctrine was established as a test of faith for those who did not believe that Jesus was truly divine (or deity), - God revealed to us in the form of a man. This began to become important in light of heresies beginning in the 2nd and 3rd centuries.

Though I understand the necessity of a test for orthodoxy, I find that the description of God (or that which is commonly called "the Godhead") to be inadequate. Churches, institutions of higher theological training such as Bible Colleges and Seminaries for centuries speak about God in philosophical and theological terms using words like, "Trinitarian" and "Godhead."

The closest thing to support for this doctrine is found in several passages in the New Testament among which are:

Matthew 28:19, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,..."

John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

John 10:30, "I and the Father are one."

John 17:20-23, 20: "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; 21: that they may all be one; even as You, Father, *are* in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. 22: "The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; 23: I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me."

Philippians 2:5-7, 5: "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6: who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7: but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men."

Hebrews 1:1-3a, 1: "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, 2: in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. 3a: And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power..."

And more. No question as to the deity of Christ and that the Holy Spirit is of God.

But I would like to be more down to earth, if that's okay with you. Now, there is a major theme throughout the Bible and it begins with God in Genesis 1, and it is that of "family."

In Genesis 1, we have God creating the universe for the benefit of mankind. And what a beautiful and enchanting place it is. When we look at Genesis 1:1, we find the words, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." All through Genesis 1 and the Bible itself, we have the word Hebrew word, "Elohim" translated "God."

This word is plural, giving rise to all kinds of conflicting doctrines and explanations. The Jews ignore it and can't explain the use of a plural when their own declaration of faith is from Deuteronomy 6:4 "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!" The word "God" in this verse is also the plural "Elohim" and the word for "one" means united together. The Jews have no real Answer for this. And, in a superficial way, one can see how the idea of a Trinity can be proposed.

The Jews object to the Christian theological doctrine called "the Trinity." They see this theological view as an attempt to take three gods and make them the same single being. Of course they don't believe Christ is the human form of God in a being we know as God's Son. So they can't answer either question and the theological/philosophical doctrine of the Trinity is inadequate in my opinion. Other religious people define this in many other ways in order to fit their Philosophy, all with serious flaws. The debate rages since the 3rd century A.D. when objections to the deity of Christ were raised by religious thinkers who had considerable influence on the masses with their teachings and writings. The doctrine of the Trinity was firmly established in 325 A. D. at the Council at Nicaea as a standard of orthodoxy by which the church could differentiate between true believers and pretenders.

How then can we answer this supposed dilemma in that there we know there is no

specific Biblical Trinitarian formula but still retain the actual Biblical teaching regarding the deity of Christ, which we know to be true? I believe the Bible can give us better answers than the theologians. Let's look at a few things. 1. In Genesis 1:26-27,

26: "Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' 27: God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them."

Okay, we have the very clear plural pronoun "our." We also have man created in His image, "male and female." This suggests that God is in some sense both male and female.

Now, in verse 28 we read,

"God blessed them; and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'"

So in God's image as male and female, this allows them to procreate. Further, they are given rule or dominion over all the earth. So at the very beginning of creation, God makes mankind in His image to create children of their own and rule the earth. When a man and a wife have children people call this group of people a...."family." This suggests that God is interested in the concept of "family" as a reproduction or image of Himself in the earth, does it not?

Now the word "family" is known as a "collective" noun - that is though it is singular it portrays multiplicity much like the word "sheep", "deer", "Elk", "army", "company", "jury", "choir" and so on.

Now, let's look at a few other passages to see if the model of a family is mentioned in various spiritual relationships.

Exodus 4:22 "Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD, "Israel is My son, My firstborn.'"

Hosea 11:1, "When Israel *was* a youth I loved him, And out of Egypt I called My son."

Jeremiah 31:9, "With weeping they will come, And by supplication I will lead them; I will make them walk by streams of waters, On a straight path in which they will not stumble; For I am a father to Israel, And Ephraim is My firstborn."

Matthew 11:27, "All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal *Him*."

Matthew 3:16-17, "After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove *and* lighting on Him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased."

Matthew 6:9, "...Our Father who is in heaven..."

Revelation 19:7-9, 7: "Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready." 8: It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright *and* clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. 9: Then he said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" And he said to me, "These are true words of God."

Ephesians 2:19, "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household,"

John 1:12, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name,"

I John 3:1-2, 1: "See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and *such* we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. 2: Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is."

Revelation 12:10, "Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night."

I Timothy 5:1, 1: "Do not sharply rebuke an older man, but *rather* appeal to *him* as

father, *to* the younger men as brothers, 2: the older women as mothers, *and* the younger women as sisters, in all purity."

I Peter 1:22-23, 22: "Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, 23: for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, *that is*, through the living and enduring word of God.

Now, the point about our inheritance and who are the heirs.

Ephesians 3:6, "*...to be specific*, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel,..."

Romans 8:14, 14: 'For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. 15: For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!" 16 : The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, 17: and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him* so that we may also be glorified with *Him*."

Galatians 3:26-29, 26: "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27: For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28: There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29: And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise."

The main point is that one cannot be an heir if one is not a part of the family.

In human society, it has been a practice for the parents to leave the remainder of their estate to their children. And, here in the United States, it is the parent's choice as to what part of the estate goes to whom, or if they have no children, or do not wish to leave the remainder of their estate to their children, they can designate it to another recipient.

The remainder of an estate is seldom willed to anyone outside of the family. This brings us to a document called, "The Last Will and Testament." It is a legal and binding document under the law. What is said there, after the testators have passed, is to be carried out as directed. Here is Papa's and Grandma's.

Our Bible is comprised of The Old Testament and the New Testament. In it are God's stipulations as to whom will be the heirs to His kingdom. To activate this will and testament, and grant the beneficiaries the wealth of the estate, the death of the one who made the will must occur. In the case of the New Testament, the death of Jesus fulfills that obligation. His resurrection assures us that there is existence beyond the grave and that His word is true. The kingdom of God belongs to those who are a part of His family. If someone is not a part of His family they do not inherit the kingdom.

So how does one become a part of this, our family? (birth or legal adoption)
God's family? (birth or legal adoption)

John 3:1-16;

I Peter 1:3-5, 3: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4: to *obtain* an inheritance *which is* imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5: who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Romans 8:14, "For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. 15: For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"

Ephesians 1:5-6, "He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, 6: to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved."

In conclusion, what will be the inheritance of those who are not a part of God's family? Excluded from the inheritance.

Ephesians 4:17-18, 17: "So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, 18: being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart;..."

My prayer is then, that this family will together all be a part of God's family and inherit the kingdom of God as His children.