

So That You May Know

An Expository Study of the Epistle of **1 John 5:6-8** Chapter 26- Understanding and Valuing the Doctrine of the Trinity 241 Our Triune God Part 13

WAQY Wednesday 08/27/08

Welcome again, my beloved in Jesus Christ. We're continuing our verse by verse "journey" through the Epistle of **1John**, and today we're going to continue to look at what John taught about "The Doctrine of the Trinity". So, let's open our Bibles and read **1John 5:6-8**- again together:

6 This is the One who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. It is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.

7 For there are three that testify:

8 the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.

Now on the last broadcast- we were going over just how important it is for the Church to know and to rightly preach Who Jesus is. For almost five chapters, now- the Apostle John has been teaching us that there are four things that are essential to being a Christian:

1. Love of God and Love for God
2. Keeping God's Commandments
3. Loving the Brethren
4. A Correct Understanding of Who Jesus is

And on the last broadcast- we were going over a time in Church History when the Christian Faith almost lost its understanding of Who Jesus is. This time is called the Arian Controversy of the fourth century and it involves a battle within the Church over the Deity of Jesus Christ.

And we saw how that by overturning laws which punished the Church- the Roman Emperor, Constantine eliminated 300 years of harsh persecution of Christianity almost overnight. And the net affect

was that the people of the fourth century Church became lax in their walk with God and nearly lost the Church.

An evil heretic, Arius rose up to denounce the Deity of Jesus Christ. Because this issue threatened to split the Church in half- many leaders within the Church were willing to compromise on Who Jesus was in order to preserve the outward show of unity.

But Alexander, the godly bishop of Alexandria, excommunicated Arius for teaching heresy and by doing this- forced the Church to decide whether or not the Christian Church was going to teach what the Bible reveals about Jesus or teach what Arius said.

So we are now at the time in this real life drama when the Emperor of Rome, Constantine, did something unprecedented. The secular ruler of a government was so shocked that people in the Church were willing to argue about such a fine point of theology that he took matters into his own hands and he called the Church together to settle this dispute. Again, there were various reasons for this unprecedented action, but the main reason was that Constantine didn't want the Christian Church to be torn apart over something that in his mind didn't matter- like Sound Doctrine.

So Constantine called the Church to gather in the city of Nicaea- which was near to Constantinople in what I today modern Turkey. According to Eusebius, the historian, the Council convened on June 19, 325 AD with 300 bishops from around the world in attendance. This was the first truly ecumenical council- meaning worldwide because- stop and think about it- this was the first time that all the bishops from around the world could gather together without the fear of persecution.

The prevailing mind set of the leaders of the Church in the fourth century was,

“Let’s just try to get along. Arius is a fine man; well-articulated; very eloquent and is very passionate about certain views. And Alexander is well respected as well, and he is old and he has a view that differs from Arius. But Arius and Alexander agree on most all other points of Doctrine. So let’s not split the Church over one letter of one word. Let’s don’t destroy Christian unity over an iota. Who cares whether Jesus was God or not? It’s enough to just simply love Jesus and to trust Him for Salvation. It really doesn’t matter Who Jesus is.”

And that is pretty much the mindset that we see today in the modern Church. And on the surface- it makes sense to talk like that because it *appears* to be so loving and gracious. It has all the earmarks of being “tolerant”- which is the new virtue that trumps all other virtues in our day. After all isn’t “Christian unity” more important than some minor difference in a Doctrine that very few people even understand anyway?

Well, No. The Apostle John said that it matters what we believe about Jesus; and it matters what are confession about Jesus is. In fact, John said that if our confession about Jesus is wrong or unbiblical- then there is reason to believe that our Salvation is not genuine.

Now it is true that the Arian Controversy of the fourth century was centered around one letter of one Greek word. But the *implication* of what Arius taught was far more important than that. Here’s why. If Arius was right- if it was true that Christ was not God but was merely a created being- who would be more than just a man- but certainly less than God- then it would be sinful to worship Christ. You see, if Christ is a created Being- then for us to worship a created being would be idolatry. We are to worship God only.

But secondly and even more important than any other argument is the unquestioned fact that the Bible clearly and repeatedly teaches that Jesus was God. For example- when Jesus was confronted by the Pharisees, He made this startling statement in **John 8:58**:

... Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.

Now what Jesus did here was use the very *same* term to describe Himself as God did when God spoke to Moses from the burning bush back in Exodus. And by using that very same term- Jesus was telling the Pharisees in no uncertain terms that He was God.

Now some say that Jesus never specifically said that He was God. I have personally heard many people say that. And they say it with such certainty as though it was true. But what these people say with such certainty is just flat out *not* true. Jesus was *clearly* telling these self- righteous Pharisees right here in **John 8** that He was God manifested in the flesh. And one of the best ways to know that- is to look at how the Pharisees *reacted* to what Jesus said. So let’s look at the very next verse in **John 8:59**:

Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him...

Now the only reason why these Jews were going to throw stones at Jesus here was because that was the punishment for blaspheming. And as far as they were concerned- Jesus had made Himself to be equal with God and they considered that to be blasphemy. So these religious hypocrites were going to kill Jesus because of this. Now let's look at another incident from **John 5:18**:

For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.

Now even though some people might be confused about Who Jesus is in our day- the Jews of that day were very much aware that when Jesus said that God was His Father- Jesus was in effect saying that He and God were equal. The Jews understood exactly what Jesus was saying about Himself and that is precisely why they wanted to kill Him.

Now the pagan Romans wanted to kill Jesus because He was creating a problem about authority in Palestine because of all the people who followed Him. But the Jews were clear about why they wanted Jesus dead- they never wavered from this one thing- Jesus had made Himself equal with God by saying that God was His Father and therefore He had to die.

Now the Apostle Paul spoke about this very same thing in **Philippians 2:6-11** when he said:

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.

8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,

10 so that at the name of Jesus *EVERY KNEE WILL BOW*, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

11 and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of

God the Father.

But how do we reconcile all of the verses that speak about Christ's Divinity with all the verses that speak about how Christ humbled Himself and how Christ grew in wisdom and how Christ exhibited human attributes and even at one time said that His Father was greater than He was?

These seemingly contradictory verses which on the one hand speak to Christ's Divinity and which at other times speak to Christ's humanity are both easily reconciled through the Doctrine of the Trinity and the Doctrine of the dual Nature of Christ- which is *why* this Doctrine is so important. Without understanding the Trinity properly, dear friends, our understanding of Who Jesus is- is guaranteed to be off base.

The Doctrine of the Trinity teaches that God is one- but He is one only in His Essence or His Substance while also- at the same time- God is *eternally* manifested in three distinct Persons of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. So Christ is different from God in Person, and function- but is the very *same* as God in Essence and Substance.

And the Doctrine of the Dual Nature of Christ teaches that Christ was the most unique Person in all of human history because unlike anyone before Him or after Him- Jesus is 100% God and 100% Man in the same Body at the same time without conflict or contradiction.

"But Brother Blair, look, I'm not an academic or a theologian. I don't see why we need to learn all of this stuff. Isn't it enough to just love Jesus and trust in Him?" Yes, it is enough to love Jesus and to trust in Him for Salvation if that's all that you wish to do.

But after a person is saved and after they start coming to Church and serving the Lord- what is the responsibility of the Church to teach what the Bible says about Jesus?

Listen to me. We as Americans should all be able to just go to work and love our families and mind our own business- right? But we were attacked on 9/11. 3,000 men, women and children were murdered that day. And since that moment- everything changed. Because we are all under the very real threat of some demon possessed maniac getting a nuclear bomb and blowing up half of Detroit at any minute. And I hate that this is true- and I resent the fact that this is true- because it

changes everything about how we live and function in this country. But it *is* true. And to try to ignore it or to try to live as we did before 9/11 and just forget about terrorism is both foolish and naïve.

Beloved, none of us wants war- we all want to just live in peace- but what do we do with those who want to destroy us- have them over for tea and crumpets? And so because we are at risk- and because we are in danger- and because we are in real jeopardy to be attacked at any minute- we must guard and we must defend ourselves and we must fight.

And this is the way it is with the Church of Jesus Christ. It would be wonderful to be able to simply love Jesus and to waltz around in sheer bliss and happiness about our own personal Salvation. And the good news is that the day is coming when we will be able to do just that in Heaven. But we're not in Heaven right now. And on the earth- the Church is under attack today by people who want to twist the scriptures so they can deceive people. Sound, Biblical Truth is being fought on every side. And things like the integrity of the Bible; and the Deity of Christ; and the Sovereignty of God are all under assault today.

And so, we must fight. And we must defend the faith and we must rebuke those who teach wrongly about these vital issues. And so as long as people in the Church want entertainment instead of edification; as long as people desire teachers to scratch their itching ears instead of teaching Biblical Christianity; as long as people are captivated by materialism and covetousness disguised as God's blessings; and as long as people are willing to value human relationships at the expense of inspired Truth; the Church will be ripe for ancient heresies to come back and infiltrate the Church all over again.

So it is not the time to be laid back and slumber. It is time to rise up in our most holy faith and it is time to grab the horns of the altar and it is time to weep between the porch and the altar and it is time for us to earnestly contend for the Faith that was once and for all delivered to the saints.

Well, I have to stop right here, but please join me on the next broadcast as we continue our journey through the Epistle of **1John**. May God help us all.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.