

Ole Miss FCA Weekly Devotional: 9/14/09

The Power and Passion of the Master Coach, Elliot Johnson



Thought of the Week:

God is a Trinity

Verse of the Week:

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

Sometimes even historical truth is hard to comprehend. For example, on May 22, 1963, the great Mickey Mantle hit a home run in Yankee Stadium against the A's Bill Fischer. The ball hit the façade in right field just six feet below the roof, coming closer to going out of the stadium than any fair ball in history! Mantle himself said he never hit a ball harder. Using metric measurement, it was estimated that the ball would have traveled 620 feet had it not hit the façade!

Sometimes truth about God is even more difficult to comprehend. One of the most difficult truths is the concept of the Trinity. To say that God is "Three-in-One" and to say that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are all equal and yet distinct in function is very puzzling. Yet, it is the truth! None of the religions of the world portray God as a "Three-in-One," with all beings coequal and coeternal. This doctrine was one of the first to be settled upon in the early church, and it became a standard by which orthodoxy was measured. A correct view of the Trinity is essential to our Christian faith and to a true understanding of God. Therefore, we must diligently study this doctrine. Remember, God is infinite and some of His ways are incomprehensible to our finite minds.

In the Old Testament, two major thoughts reveal the Trinity. The first is that God is one, and the second is that God is a plurality. The name Elohim, which God designated for Himself in Genesis 1:1, is plural and suggests a plurality of beings. While we cannot build a doctrine on one name, the entire Old Testament supports this truth. God says in Genesis 1:26, "Let us make man in our image" (emphasis added). In Isaiah 6:8, God says to Isaiah, "Who will go for us!" In the second Psalm 22 is found a prophecy of Christ, the Son, saying, "My God, my God." The names Yahweh and Elohim are used interchangeably for the Father, Son (Psalm 68:18; 2:7), and Spirit (Isaiah 11:2; 61:1).

While God is a plurality, Scripture also teaches that God is one. Deuteronomy 6:4 says, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord." In Exodus 20:3, God commanded Israel to have "no other gods before Him." The Old Testament presents a God who is One, yet Three-in-One!

The New Testament accounts of the Trinity are clearer. In many passages, all three members of the Trinity are in action at one time. Jesus said that we were to baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19-20). The works of the Trinity are seen together in Christ's baptism (Matthew 3:13-17), Christ's resurrection (Luke 24), the resurrection of all mankind, the creation (Colossians 1:16-18; John 1:1-3), and in the inspiration of Scripture (2 Peter 1:20-21).

Not only do all three members of the Trinity work together, but each member claims to be God. First, God the Father is God (John 6:27) and is Father over all creation. For example, I Corinthians 8:6 says, "Yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live." Second, Jesus is God and has always existed as the Son. In John 8:58,

Jesus told the Pharisees, "Before Abraham was born, I am." In John 1:1-4, 14, Christ was not only with God but was God and ever will be God. Jesus said that He came down from heaven (John 6:33), and Paul said that Jesus found it not robbery to be equal with God (Philippians 2:6). Jesus was given the name Immanuel which means "God with us" (Matthew 1:23). Colossians 2:9 says, "All the fullness of deity dwells in Him" (Christ). Jesus Himself claimed to possess only what God could possess. The angels of God were at His disposal, and He knew their activity (Luke 12:8-9; 15:10). Jesus claimed to forgive sins, which only God can do (Mark 2:8-10). Jesus reigns over the world (Colossians 1:15-20) and has power to judge the world (Matthew 25:31; 2 Corinthians 5:10). In Christ are portrayed all the attributes of God. He who does not see God in Christ does not see God at all! Jesus summed up His deity by saying to Philip, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9).

The third part of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, also has the qualities of God and performs the works of God. He convicts men of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8). He regenerates life in man (John 3:8). He bestows gifts upon the church (I Corinthians 12:4-11). In Acts 5:3-4, we see that lying to the Holy Spirit is equivalent to lying to God! The Holy Spirit is grieved by man's sinfulness (Ephesians 4:30). The Spirit's job is to remind us what the Son has said (John 14:26). He bears witness to the Son (John 15:26). He declares what He hears from the Son and brings glory to the Son (John 16:13-14).

In summary, our God is "Three-in-One!" The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are coequal and coeternal. The role of each differs, and one may even subordinate Himself to the other as Jesus subordinated Himself to the Father! Yet, none is inferior in essence! Our finite minds cannot grasp the mystery of the Infinite, nor can we simplify God. We simply praise and glorify Him!

Just as it is hard to conceive of Mickey Mantle's home run going over 210 yards in the air, so it is difficult to understand the triune nature of Almighty God.

Time Out:

- 1) Why is a knowledge of the Trinity important? Can you deny the existence and role of any member of the Trinity and still live effectively as a Christian?
- 2) Belief in the Trinity is one measure of true Christianity. Satan uses cults to continually trip up believers in their walk with Christ. The Jehovah's Witness cult, Mormonism, and others deny this basic doctrine. How can you help a friend who is trapped in these groups?
- 3) What do these verses confirm regarding the Trinity?
John 1:33-34; John 14:16, 26; John 16:13-15; John 20:21-22; Acts 2:33, 38; I Corinthians 12:4-6; Galatians 4:6; Romans 15:16; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; Ephesians 1:3-14