

Three That Bear Witness — The Trinity, the Son, and the Spirit

Ministry on 1 John 5:8 · January 7, 2007

Three in One — The Witness of the Spirit, the Water, and the Blood

First John 5:8 sets before us three witnesses in the earth: the Spirit, and the water, and the blood — and these three agree in one. They are not three witnesses pointing in different directions; they all converge on one point, one purpose, one person. The water and the blood come from the Lord's pierced side at the cross. The Spirit was the power by which Christ ever wrought throughout His earthly life. Three in one — agreeing, testifying together.

And John chapter 1 gives us the three divine persons behind this convergence. Verse 18: no man has seen God at any time — the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him. Verse 33: upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and abiding on Him, the same is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. Father, Son, Spirit — three persons, one God, one unified witness to the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jehovah Our Elohim — Plurality in the Unity

In the Old Testament, Israel was given to stand as testimony against the multiplicity of heathen gods. The nations had many gods and many places of worship. Israel had one God and one place of worship — God was pressing toward unity. The Shema — the Lord our God is one Lord — was the declaration of that unity. But even within that declaration, a remarkable thing is present in the Hebrew: the word Elohim is plural. Hebrew distinguishes singular, dual, and

plural. Elohim is not dual; it is plural — three or more. Hebrew scholars sometimes explain this as a plural of majesty, but that explanation does not fully account for what the word carries.

Jehovah our Elohim is one Jehovah — one God, but a plurality of persons. This is not something the Old Testament fully revealed, but it is embedded there for those with eyes to see. The full revelation came with Christianity — who these persons are, what their distinct roles are, and how they relate to one another.

The Son Sent from the Father — Moral Movements

John 16 contains the Lord's own words about his coming and going: I came out from the Father and am come into the world — I leave the world and go to the Father. There is a circle in those words: out from the Father, into the world, out of the world, to the Father. And within that circle, there are two moral movements to consider. Coming out from the Father was on the other side of the incarnation — a movement of the eternal Son in relation to the Father. And am come into the world took place at the conception — the point of the incarnation itself.

When the Son came into the world, then — as one servant of Christ put it — the Son moved into the bosom of the Father. This is eternal and everlasting. The only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father: that relationship did not cease with the incarnation. It is of the very being of God that the Son is in that place of intimacy with the Father. And from that place He came out and was sent, and declared Him.

The Spirit Sent in Special Capacity — and the Dove's Testimony

The Spirit of God is omnipresent — He was present before Pentecost, working and moving throughout the Old Testament. But the Lord spoke of Him as coming, as being sent, as arriving in a special capacity for a specific purpose. On

the day of Pentecost the Spirit came in that capacity — to indwell the church, to form the body of Christ, to unite every believer to the head in heaven. When that indwelling is removed, it will be as a restrainer taken away, because the Spirit is a person and His ministry in that special capacity is a definite and distinct thing.

In John 1, John the Baptist testifies: upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and abiding on Him, the same is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. John knew the Lord Jesus before the baptism in the Jordan — he was acquainted with Him. But he did not know Him in the deepest inward sense — that knowledge came through the sign. The Spirit descended in bodily form as a dove and remained on Him. Not intermittently, not for a season — abiding on Him. The Spirit was given to the Lord Jesus without measure, as John 3:34 confirms. And the Spirit who came upon Him is the very Spirit He sends to baptize believers.

Where Did Love Come From? — The Necessity of the Trinity

The doctrine of the Trinity is not only fundamental to the faith — it is deeply precious to the soul. Consider the question: where did love come from? If God were one person rather than three, the Father loving the Son would be impossible. There would be no Son to love. And with that, the entire framework of divine love collapses. But the Father ever loved the Son — before the world was made, before time began, in that eternal fellowship of the divine persons. Love did not begin at creation. It existed eternally in the love of the Father for the Son.

The same applies to fellowship. Where did fellowship come from? If God were a solitary person, there would have been no fellowship until creatures existed. But fellowship among the divine persons is eternal. The mutual joy, the mutual knowledge, the mutual love of Father, Son, and Spirit — these are not things that began at Pentecost or at creation. They are of the eternal being of God.

Christianity is wiped out if the Trinity is denied. It is not merely an abstract theological question. Every truth we hold dear depends upon it: the Father sending the Son, the Son declaring the Father, the Spirit sent by the Son, the love of God manifested in the giving of His only begotten — all of this requires three distinct persons who are one God. This is a very, very precious doctrine. The more it is understood, the more the soul rejoices in it. And the three that bear witness in earth — the Spirit, the water, and the blood — all agree in one: they point together to that Son who came out from the Father, was declared by the Father, and was marked out by the Spirit, so that we might know Him.

No man has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him. — John 1:18

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