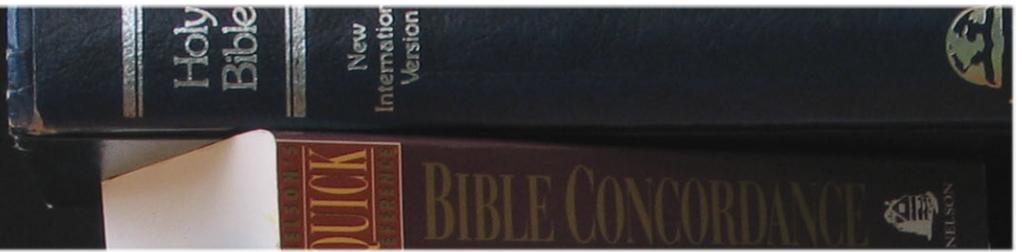


Life Group Notes

April 22, 2012



Topics to Discuss

Remaining Doctrines from Current Series

- Pre-Flood Life Spans vs. Post-Flood
- The Trinity
- Homosexuality and the Bible
- Spiritual Warfare

Proposed Topics for the Rest of Spring

- God - The Trinity or The Triunity
- God is Holy & Intimate
- God - The Holy Spirit
 - Who He Is & What He Does

3 weeks left in semester

Service projects for the summer

BBQ

God - The Trinity or The Triunity

Summarized Biblical-Definition of God

GOD =

GREAT (amazing: powerful, wonderful, master/boss)

TRI- (3 "persons": distinct, members, inter-related)

UNE (1 "essence": same, unifying characteristics)

SPIRIT (invisible: essentially, spiritual/soulical, but appear-able)

BEING (personal: mind, emotion, will)

The Triunity

How the View of God was Deepened by a Carpenter

How did the O.T. Jewish leaders, teachers, preachers, rabbis, theologians officially view/define the God of Israel: Yahweh? He was the "**Almighty One**," the "**One True God**," the "**One Creator of All**," etc. God's "oneness" was clearly revealed & understood (though not always faithfully believed & practiced by Israel as a whole).

God was also often revealed & viewed as Israel's ultimate "**Father**"—Dt. 1:30-31; 32:5-6; Isa. 63:15-16; 64:8-9. Israel's "**Father-God**" was, therefore, **One**: implying & being perceived (to/by them) as a 1-Person God—cf. Dt. 6:4; Isa. 43:10-13, 15; 44:6-8, 24.

Yet, clues were revealed & written in the O.T. that God was more than a 1-Person God—e.g. Ps. 2 (**Father & Son**); 110 (**Lord & Lord**); Isa. 9:6 (**child/son = God**); 63:10-16 (**Lord/Father & Holy Spirit**); Jer. 23:5-6 (**Lord & Lord**); Dan. 7:13-14 (**2 divine Persons worthy of glory & worship**).

Still, even with these clues, it was never clear to Israel nor to its average leaders/teachers that God was a **multi-person God**—even with their view of the prophesied Messiah (Christ) as a special godly person. Israel's long-entrenched monotheism led them to assume **unitarianism: God as only a 1-person God**.

Then Jesus shows up. **He challenged everyone's traditional view of God as unitarian**. He claimed to be the long-prophesied & awaited Messiah, who was to fulfill the Old Covenant promises, accomplish salvation, & initiate the long-awaited New Covenant.

At the end of Jesus' 3 1/2 year ministry, he was executed as a criminal on 1 charge: **claiming to be divine** (e.g., the I Am—Yahweh, equality with God, the Son of God, a Forgiver of sins, the future Judge of all)—Jn. 5:17-27; 6:26-42; 8:42-59; 10:22-33.

Interestingly, 2,000 years later, Jesus is recognized worldwide (~90 % of the world) as a person who was/is noble, good, & wise (sagacious), yet not necessarily recognized as claiming divinity or being divine [cf. the problem with this].

For those in the 1st century who did believe that Jesus was divine, a theological puzzle emerged: **how was God to be viewed/defined now?**

- (1) Without any sophisticated theological explanation regarding how, they believed that the evidence was strong (e.g., Jesus' miracles, resurrection, O.T. fulfillment-correspondence) that Jesus was indeed divine;
- (2) This clearly & necessarily meant that God had to be understood now as being at least 2 Persons (Father & Son);
- (3) Jesus, being divine (& human), had also taught that he would send another divine-being/person like him (Holy Spirit), who also matched related prophecies in the O.T. & was publicly evidenced in the miraculous-giving of foreign-national

tongues/languages & flame-type appearances upon the heads of many believers after Jesus' ascension;

- (4) This clearly & necessarily meant that God was now to be understood (somehow) as a 3-Person God (Father, Son, Other/Holy-Spirit).

How this could be theologically explained (at least to some degree), would occupy the minds of many for the next ~400 years, culminating in the Council of Chalcedon in 451. **Yet, Jesus' lordship/divinity was early & clearly established in the 1st century.** In fact, the 1st "confession/creed" was "Jesus is Lord" (Divine/Master)—Ro. 10:9; 1 Co. 12:3; Php. 2:11. This settled once-&-for-all that God had to be a multi-person being.

The Holy Spirit (the Other) was also quickly accepted as divine in the 1st century, leading to an **early-stage trinitarianism**—Mt. 28:19; 2 Co. 13:14; Jude 20-21. This tri-unity of God **preserves traditional-biblical monotheism** (there is only 1 God), while respecting the **deeper understanding of God as being multi-person** (there are 3 persons united as 1 God), thus a triunity. But it all starts, in terms of clarity, with Jesus.

As early & wise voices attested, the Savior of mankind must be more than just a human: **only God can save humanity**—Isa. 59:15-16; 63:4-5; 61:1-2a; Lk. 4:14-21.

Therefore, this unusual carpenter-preacher (the unique God/man Messiah) deepened the view of God/Yahweh.

Follow-up Questions:

1. For all who call themselves Christians (i.e., Christ = Savior, Son of God), why must they reject unitarianism? (*In other words, why does a person who claims to believe-in/follow Christ (as in Savior...) must believe that God is multi-person?*)

Only God can save, ∴ Jesus had to be God—in addition to being human—in order to save millions of humans. 1 holy human could potentially save 1 sinful human—cf. 1 innocent/"holy" sacrificed-animal skin initially covering/atoning for 1 human (Ge. 3:6-7; Lev. 1:1-4)—but many humans are involved in salvation, & animal sacrifices could only be temporary because they are not human substitutes—Heb. 2:14-17; 10:1-10. ∴ **the Savior had to be both divine & human (= Jesus). & this necessarily leads to God being multi-person: at least Father & Son** (who added a human nature to his eternal divine nature).

Note: the O.T. name-form "Joshua" & N.T. name-form "Jesus" (same name) = "God is salvation"—cf. Lk. 1:26-33, 46-47. ∴ Father-God remains as the person Father, who sends His eternal Son as the Savior, who prays to & does the will of the Father.

Furthermore, to call oneself "Christ"ian (instead of "Father"ian) & who worships/follows Christ (not just the Father), is to be guilty of blasphemy/idolatry, ∴ condemned unless Jesus is divine. Also, Jesus taught that the Holy Spirit is divine like him—Jn. 14:15-26; 16:5-15; Ac. 1:4-5; 2:1-18. ∴ **to be Christ ian logically requires a multi-person/tri-une God.**

2. How are we to more-fully understand such a God as this: triune (3 "Persons" as 1 "God")?

We can attempt to give an initial answer to this question, but no human—even with Scripture's help (our clearest source)—will ever fully understand this, for now. It is so strange to us, & the Scriptures do not give a full account or explanation. Yet, it is revealed & evidential that God is (somehow) trinitarian. In some ways it is like believing (for non-technicians) in the reality of t.v.: we do not fully understand how t.v. can be the way it is, yet we believe it like the above.

Fine-Tuning the Biblical Definition/View of God—the Triunity

1. Though the doctrine of the Trinity is primarily due to special/biblical revelation, philosophy has been a helpful servant in improving the greater understanding of this challenging doctrine. cf. Tertullian & his use of "essence" (1) & "persons" (3); Augustine & his use of "love/sharing/giving/communicating in eternity past"; etc.—in regard to the Trinity, a created title. ∴ the Triune God (Yahweh) = 1 Divine Essence unitedly shared by 3 Divine Persons.
2. "Essence" (God as 1) = God's essential nature/character in (a.) **position**, (b.) **power**, (c.) **presence**, & (d.) **personality**. Each person of God is the same/equal (having divinity) due to their sharing/being-united in these divine characteristics: (a.) being in the same **position** (supreme over all creation), (b.) having the same **powerful** attributes (might, knowledge, love, etc.), (c.) having the same omnipresent **presence** (as spirit), & (d.) having the same **personality** (mind, emotion, will). [*1 God—Dt. 6:4; Isa. 43:10-13; 44:6-20; 45:1-25 (+ N.T. references).*]
3. "Persons" (God as 3) = Father, Son, & Holy Spirit's distinct inter-relations as personal members (perichoresis: mutual inter-relatedness of Persons). They are distinct—as personal members (F. is F., not S. or H.S.; S. is S., not F. or H.S.; H.S. is H.S., not F. or S.). They are all/equally divine (see above), but they also are all distinct. In their united divinity, they are each inter-related: loving, sharing-with, giving-to, communicating-with, glorifying each other. The Father is in a "Father"-type relationship to the Son, the Son is in a "Son"-type relationship to the Father, the Other/Another (Holy Spirit, paraclete: one called alongside, a similar one) is in an "Other/similar"-type relationship to the Son & Father. [*3 Persons—Mt. 3:13-17; 28:19; Jn. 14; 17:20-26; 1 Co. 2:10-16; 2 Co. 13:14; Eph. 4:3-6; Jude 20-21 (+ O.T. clues).*]