

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 242 Our Triune God Part 14

WAOY Thursday 08/28/08

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- the Apostle John has been teaching us that there are four things that are essential to being a Christian:

1. Love of God and 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.

Now I have been trying to show you over the last several broadcasts how that putting Sound Doctrine on the back burner got the Church in real hot water in the fourth century. The effort by the Church to try to

escape their responsibility to guard the Truth resulted in the Arian heresy becoming so big that it nearly destroyed the Church.

And the lesson here, if we will learn this lesson, is that when heresy enters into the Church- and periodically it will- we must deal with it Scripturally and confront it head on- or else it will grow to become a huge issue.

We must be very careful that we do not do great damage to the revealed Truth of God by minimizing or by marginalizing the exactness of Scripture when it comes to Doctrine- especially about the Doctrines of Grace and the Person and Work of Jesus Christ and the Sovereignty of God.

So the Council of Nicaea met in the city of Nicaea on June 19, 325. And 300 bishops from around the world gathered to hear and see and comprehend exactly what the Bible taught about the Deity of Christ.

Arius, the heretic, was teaching that Christ was a created being and *not* God wrapped in human flesh. Arius said that Christ was neither Divine, nor was he truly human, but was a “mediator” between God and humans- something in between God and humans- a kind of demi-god, if you will. In fact, this is *exactly* how Arius spoke of Christ.

According to Arius, Christ was the firstborn of all creation- higher than any other angelic creature- God- like to be sure- but a creature made by the Creator nonetheless. And as I have mentioned several times- the great danger of accepting what Arius taught and believing that Jesus was a created being rather than believing what the Bible says about Jesus- that He was God and was with God in the beginning- causes you to reject Christ’s full Divinity. And if Jesus is not Deity- then we cannot be saved- because Paul said in **Romans 10:9** that we must confess that Jesus Christ is Lord in order to be saved- or in other words- that we must confess that Jesus is God Almighty wrapped in human flesh in order to be saved.

Now many people have asked me why all this history matters to us today. I mean it is interesting what happened 1700 years ago in the Arian Controversy of the fourth century- but what does that have to do with us who live in the 21st Century? Well, a lot- because the very same heresy of Arius is alive and well and being taught today.

You see, dear friends, what Arius taught was thoroughly analyzed by the Church back then at the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD. And it was totally rejected and it was formally and officially declared to be a heresy

because it contradicts what the Scripture declares to be true about Who Jesus is. But even though this false teaching about Jesus was rejected and denounced- it didn't disappear.

When Arius realized that the jig was up and he was exposed to be the false teacher that he was- he was excommunicated from the Church because he refused to repent- but he didn't stop teaching his lies. But because he had been labeled as a heretic- he could not get a crowd of any size to listen to him. So his blasphemous teaching about Jesus was relegated to the trash bin of history for over 1500 years- until the late 1800's when a Baptist preacher by the name of Charles Taze Russell uncovered the ancient heresy of Arius and was deceived by it and began to teach it to anyone who would listen.

In the early 1880's Russell bought a small Bible Publishing company in New York City and renamed it The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. And from those printers- the 1500 year- old heresy of Arius began to be published and distributed all around the Northeast. After Russell's death in 1916- The name of the organization that promoted the ancient heresy of Arius was changed to be The Jehovah's Witnesses.

And so the ancient heresy of Arianism- which denies the Deity of Jesus Christ and which teaches that Christ was a created being- is the foundational Doctrine of the Jehovah' Witness organization. And those nice and friendly people who knock on your door on Saturday's to give you their tracts- they use the very *same* arguments that Arius did in the fourth century to continue to teach that Christ is not Deity.

Now what is also very interesting is not only does the Jehovah's Witnesses organization use Arius ancient heresy as their foundational teaching- but they also did what Arius and his followers wanted to do to the Bible- but were not able.

In my office, I have a copy of *The New Word Translation* of the Holy Bible which is published by The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York- the company that publishes Jehovah's Witness' material. And this is a slanderous copy of the Holy Bible which the modern day followers of Arius had printed that has done what they wanted to do over 1600 years ago.

Remember that I told you that at one time the leaders of the Church were so complacent about this struggle over the Deity of Christ

that they were willing to change the Bible in order to fit what Arius was teaching. Well, the New World Translation has done just that.

So if you turn to **John 1:1** in the New World Translation- this is what you will find:

“In the beginning was the Word; the Word was with God; and the Word was *a* god”

Notice that the modern day followers of Arius have added one letter- the letter “a” to this verse in their so-called “bible”. And they didn’t capitalize the word, “god” at the end of this verse either. And this change was made- not based on any Greek manuscript in existence- but was made solely to satisfy their false teaching that Jesus was a created being and not God. So once again- 1600 years after Arius first tried to add one letter to one word- the modern day followers of the heresy of Arianism have added one letter to one verse that radically changes the meaning of what the Apostle John wrote in this verse.

And like many did in the fourth century- there are those today who say, *“Who cares? What difference does it make? It’s just one little letter of one single verse? What possible harm could this do to people who are sincere about what they believe? Doctrine doesn’t matter today. All that we need is to love Jesus.”*

But the Apostle John says that it *does* matter what we believe and what we confess about Jesus. And if we get Who Jesus is- wrong- if we do not believe that Jesus is God- then everything changes.

And with all due respect, dear friends- sincerity is not enough; and passion is not enough; and earnestness is not enough. It matters what you believe, and it matters why you believe it and it is a myth to believe that you can love Jesus and serve Jesus and still not know Who He is.

Being moral and loving your wife and doing nice things and having a kind heart is all fine and good. But we are making a terrible mistake to equate that kind of human morality with Salvation. Putting forth effort and will power to improve- to some degree- our own human morality is *not* the same thing as being born again, dear friends. *Anybody* can be moral to some extent- but Jesus had to die and rise again to purchase Salvation. Some of the most moral; people on earth are Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, Mormons and even some atheists. But they are not Christians and they are not saved.

Look, if all we have to do to be saved is to be nice- then why did Jesus die a horrible and brutal death? Why do we need Grace if all we need to do to go to Heaven is improve our actions? The Bible is crystal clear about this, dear friends- there is no wiggle room here. God's inspired, infallible, inerrant Word says in **Romans 10:9** that in order to be saved- we have to confess with our mouths that Jesus is Lord; that Jesus is God; that Jesus is Master and Sovereign and King and that He is in fact Yahweh wrapped in human flesh- and without that very specific confession- nobody gets saved- period.

So I repeat what I said at the beginning of this section of our study of **1John**- the Apostle John taught that it matters what we believe and what we confess about Jesus. We are not free to make up our own personal doctrine about Who Jesus is and what Jesus did. The Scriptures are very clear about Who Jesus is and even though for us to believe everything that the Bible says about Jesus may stretch the limits of our minds- we must accept the fact, beloved, that Jesus was the most unique Person Who ever lived and that He was fully God and fully Man. And so to disbelieve that Jesus was fully human makes you off base and to disbelieve that Jesus was fully Divine makes you off base as well. And to reject either Christ's full humanity or His full Divinity does not make you a Christian, dear friends. A Christian accepts what the Bible declares about both the Humanity and the full Deity of Jesus Christ. So those who don't accept all that the Bible says about Jesus may be a lot of nice and even noble things- but they are not Christians and they are not saved and they are not going to Heaven.

We need to know that rejection of Christ's full Humanity qualifies us as being a Gnostic- but it doesn't allow us to call ourselves a Christian. And the rejection of Christ's full Deity qualifies us as an Arian or a Muslim or a Jew or a Buddhist or a Hindu or a Taoist or a whole host of other things- but it does not allow us to call ourselves a Christian either.

And if Jesus is fully God then there must be two gods unless of course The Doctrine of the Trinity is true- which is why we need to understand this difficult Doctrine and why we need to teach it and why we need to confess it and why we need to defend it against all modern day Arians and all modern day Gnostics who would deny what the Bible says is true about Jesus.

Arius, the heretic over emphasized those passages of Scripture that illustrate Christ's humanity at the expense of those passages that illustrate Christ's Divinity. So much that Arius said about Christ's humanity was true- but he didn't bother to include the Scriptures that deal with Christ's Divinity in his argument. So even though Arius was speaking *partial* truth- he was grossly incomplete and that incompleteness put forth a false and incomplete understanding about Who Jesus is- and Arius knew that. Arius did this on purpose.

Beloved, the Bible clearly reveals to us that Christ was fully human. He lived; He breathed; He ate food; He got tired; He wept; He bled and He died. All those many verses that describe human attributes about Jesus are absolutely true and they do not in any way contradict the many verses that speak of Christ's Divinity. But people do get confused about how to fit Christ's humanity in together with His Divinity in our minds and what helps to do this is the Doctrine of the Trinity. And that's why this stuff matters.

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.