

## The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit.

As one who was raised as a Jehovah's Witness, who then came to know Jesus in a new and clearer way, the question of the identity, rank and personalities of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit was a thorny, knotty one. The issue of who is Jesus in relation to the Father, and the issue of the personality or non-personality of the Holy Spirit; and then the issues of the equality or subordination of Jesus, were difficult to resolve.

As I look back, I see that the difficulty lay not so much in Scripture, but in the nature of the human brain and heart and spirit and the delusion of the Watchtower spirit. All my life up to the point of Jesus' bold intervention into my life, my beliefs were shaped and reinforced and rutted into my mentality by the Watchtower Society. Over and over, certain verses were quoted and discussed with a WT skew on them. The JW's were constantly doing battle with what they said was the Trinity doctrine, and using verses which seemed to bolster their position, at least as they slanted the discussion.

### Declared Righteous by Faith in Christ

As I have mentioned elsewhere, the first real epiphany for me was the realization that Jesus had died for my sins, and that I had *trusted in his sacrifice as the full payment for my sins*, and that therefore God had declared me righteous according to his word in Romans chapter 3. This brought down the Watchtower house of cards, because the WT teaches that only the 144,000 are declared righteous and that everyone else has to wait till the thousand year reign of Christ is over and the final test is administered before being declared righteous and assured of eternal life.

Before I go any further, let me remind you that if you have trusted in Jesus as the full payment for

your sins, and have received him into your heart as Savior and Lord, (Lord means he gets to call all the shots now), then according to Jesus in John 5:28, you have transferred from death to life and you have eternal life NOW. According to Paul's writings to the Romans, you are thus declared righteous NOW. The whole effort of satan and his minions is to keep you from realizing that and to keep you from living in the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

That said, let's take a look at this beautiful relationship between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

### Love Between the Father and Son

The Pharisaic Jewish mind found the concept of God as Father to be a strange one. As you read the record of confrontations between Jesus and the religious leaders, you see their resistance to the constant references Jesus made. Nonetheless, "Father" is the term Jesus commonly used. The gospels are filled with this term. It is in the book of John, in his Passover discussion, that he really pulls back the curtain and sheds light on their relationship. It is revealed in the prayer of Jesus in John 17:20-24.

Here he prays that his followers may come into the relationship the Father and Son enjoy, "that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world." And in verse 26 he says, "I have made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them." (The Watchtower's New World Translation inserts the phrase "in union

with” to replace and obscure the word “in” and thus deprive the reader of understanding this wonderful relationship Jesus is describing. Said translation is a hatchet job on God’s Word and better left ignored.)

## Distinct Personalities

It is obvious from these and numerous other passages of Scripture that Jesus interacted with another personality whom he identified as “Father,” and that the Bible regards that person as God the Father. Nothing could be clearer than the concept that Jesus and the Father are *two distinct persons* in Scripture. When Jesus was praying, such as in the Garden of Gethsemane, it was to the Father, and their distinct personality is manifest. Consider Luke 22:41, 42. “Then he withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, knelt down and prayed, ‘Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, *not my will but yours be done.*’”

Not only does Jesus here talk to a person other than himself, but draws a distinction of wills. “Not my will, but yours be done.” We know Jesus was talking to God. The Christian community would be quick to say, “Yes, he was talking to God the Father, he being God the Son.”

The anti-trinitarian would object, “1 Timothy 2:5, 6 says, ‘There is one God; there is also one mediator between God and man, a man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all.’ Since there is one God, Jesus cannot be God or there would be two Gods.” There would follow a lesson in mathematics: One plus one plus one equals three, not one.”

## Can Three be One?

Well, in human terms one plus one plus one does equal three. There are many historical analogies used to try to explain the teaching of the Trinity, and since

they are all based on human physical experience, they seem to crumble on close analysis. So I won’t bother using such analogies. But, instead, let’s look at a very intriguing passage in Scripture. It is the record of the demon-possessed man in Gadara. In Mark 5:8, 9 Jesus is ordering the unclean spirit out of the man. “For he had said to him, ‘Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!’ Then Jesus asked him, ‘What is your name?’ He replied, ‘My name is Legion; for *we are many.*’” My name? We?

This verse identifies “the unclean spirit,” an expression that is singular, and then the spirit says “we are many.” What does that seem to be saying? It seems to indicate that in the spirit realm, many can become one. Multiple personalities become one entity. Chew on that for awhile.

## Check Your Motive

Before this goes any further, let me say this: The primary thing to consider here is, “Am I sincere?” Do I really want to find out what the Bible is teaching, or do I want to defend my religious group and its position?” A long time ago, I decided that all I wanted was to know what God was actually teaching in the Bible and accept that as the truth of the matter. I was raised as a Jehovah’s Witness and believed as they taught. But the time came when I told God that I just wanted to know the truth and let the chips fall where they may. What follows are some of the things which I was granted to see and understand as a result of that prayer.

Perhaps there is a little voice that tells you, “You don’t have the authority to find the truth on your own. You have to depend on the organization for that. They are God’s channel of communication.” Well, consider this verse: “As for you, the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and so *you do not need anyone to teach you.* But as his anointing

teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, abide in him.” (1 John 2:27)

Remember the verse we quoted from 1 Timothy above? Notice that it says “..there is one mediator between God and man, a man Christ Jesus.” In their publication, Aid to Bible Understanding, the WT actually teaches that the remnant of the 144,000 are the mediator between God and the “Other Sheep” who they say will live on earth. This is a blatant contradiction of Scripture, a usurpation of the place of Christ and flies in the face of John’s statement above. You have every right to expect that if you go to God with a sincere heart and ask for him to teach you about these things, he will do so. “If any of you is lacking in wisdom, *ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you.*” (James 1:5)

## Worship and Glory

Now, what does God receive from his creation that no one else is supposed to receive? Jesus, in answering the devil’s offer of worldwide authority if Jesus would render an act of worship to him, said, “It is written, ‘*Worship the Lord, and serve only him.*’” That was a quote from Deuteronomy 6:13. In Revelation 22:8-9 we have the example of the Apostle John who was so overcome with emotion at the visions the Lord Jesus had revealed to him that “I fell down at the feet of the angel who showed them to me, but he said to me, ‘You must not do that!...*Worship God!*’” So we see that worship belongs to God and no one else, not even the angels!

There are many verses of Scripture that reserve worship to Jehovah God, or as most versions render the name, The LORD. For instance, Isaiah 42:8 says, “I am the LORD [Jehovah]; that is my name! *I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols.*” A similar verse is found in Isaiah 48:11, where Jehovah,

the LORD, says, “I will *not yield my glory* to another.”

Now let’s take a look at the words of Jesus in Mark 8:38: “If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in *his Father’s glory* with the holy angels.” That’s interesting. Jehovah, the Father, says he will not give or share his glory with another, but Jesus says he will come in his Father’s glory. Now look at John again, in John 17:5 where Jesus is praying and says, “And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with *the glory I had with you* before the world began.”

## Worship Offered to Jesus

Well, if Jesus possesses the same glory as the Father, do we have a record of times when he received worship and did not refuse it? Indeed we have! Look at John 20:27, 28. “Then he said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.’ Thomas said to him, ‘My Lord and my God!’” Notice Thomas said *to him*, “My Lord and my God!” Literally, to speak to the WT issue of *the* God versus *a* god, the verse in the Greek says, “The Lord of me and the God of me.” Thomas addressed Jesus here as God and Lord. This was not just an exclamation, taking the Lord’s name in vain, but rather a confession of faith in Jesus as Lord and God.

What was Jesus’ reaction to this? Did he rebuke Thomas for giving him something reserved for God? No, he commended him! In verse 29 Jesus says, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” Believed what? That Jesus is God and Lord!

Now look at Luke 24:51, 52. This was the occasion of Jesus leaving the earth and ascending to the Father. “While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. *And they worshiped*

*him* and returned to Jerusalem with great joy.” Did you see that? “They worshiped him.”

The first chapter of Hebrews is a fascinating read, for the writer focuses on the superiority of Jesus over all others, including Moses and the angels. In verse 6 he writes, “And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, ‘Let all God’s angels *worship him.*’” This reference is to Deuteronomy 32:43 in the Septuagint version which was extant in Paul’s day, and Psalm 97:7. Both references speak of Jehovah God and are here applied to Jesus.

## Prayer Offered to Jesus

Now let’s look at a very practical verse in the Book of Acts, chapter 7, where the life of Stephen is related. Stephen has recited the history of the Israelites to the religious authorities and accuses them of always resisting the Holy Spirit. Then they take him out to stone him to death. As the stones are crashing into him, Stephen has a vision of Jesus at the right hand of God. (A term, by the way, that implies equality.) As he is dying, he does an amazing thing. In verse 59, “While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed (literally, “called upon”) ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’” Again, in verse 60, “Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them.’”

Let me ask you this: “To whom do you pray? Is it not to God? If, as some believe, it is only the Father to which we should pray, why is Stephen here praying to Jesus? Yes, *he is praying to Jesus.* The form of the Greek text shows his prayer is one of direct address to Jesus. Isn’t it peculiar that, if the WT were correct, Stephen in the hour of his death would do the thing forbidden by God and address prayer to someone other than Jehovah?

The answer is simple: Jesus is God. He is God the Son. John uses that expression in John 1:18. “No

one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father’s heart, who has made him known.” To translate this verse more literally, “God no one has seen ever yet; only-born God the one being in the lap of the Father that one explained.” (Word Study Greek-English New Testament by Paul R. McReynolds.)

## Worship Offered to Jesus in Heaven

In the Book of Revelation we see a vision of the worship and adoration going on in heaven by the redeemed and the angels. In chapter 4, verses 9-11 we find “Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to the one who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall before the one who is seated on the throne and worship the one who lives forever and ever; they cast their crowns before the throne, singing, ‘You are worthy, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.’”

Now move over to chapter 5 and you will find the Lamb who was slain, “having seven horns (all authority) and seven eyes (all knowing) which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth ... When he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders *fell before the Lamb*, each holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. They sing a new song: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll and to open the seals, for you were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation;’” (Revelation 5:6-9) Here the praise and prayers of the saints are offered to Jesus!

The crescendo of accolades and praise builds as we move to verses 12-14: “Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” Then

I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them singing, 'To the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever.' And the four living creatures said, 'Amen!' And the elders *fell down and worshiped.*"

Do you see this picture? Every creature in every part of all God's creation is singing praise to the Father and the Son and worshiping the Father and the Son. It is just as Jesus foretold in John 5:23, "So that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Anyone who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him."

## "The Father is Greater than I"

But didn't Jesus himself say in John 14:28, "The Father is greater than I"? Well let's first of all quote the whole verse. "You heard me say to you, 'I am going away, and I am coming to you.' If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I." What was Jesus talking about?

He was, of course saying that he would be killed on the cross, and would move into the higher realm of the heavens, alongside the Father, and that was indeed a greater, a better place to be. As a man, Jesus was in a lesser place than the Father, true. He was also in a lesser place than himself. What does that mean?

Take a look at Philippians 2:5-8. "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. Being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross."

Notice the contrast: He was in the form of God – he took the form of man. He did not regard equality with God as something to exploit, or more literally, he did not selfishly cling to that equality, grasping it and refusing to let it go. He set it aside. *He became less than his own rightful self* and took on the lowly form of humanity in order to die for humanity. When he returned to the heavens, he took back his form of God. He now was greater, in a greater place, than he was when he prayed the prayer in John 14:28.

## Every Knee Shall Bow

Continue on in Phippians 2:9-11. "Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that *at the name of Jesus every knee should bend*, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

He was greater; he became lesser; he was made greater again. His name is above every name. Paul's reference here reflects back to Isaiah 45:23-25 where Jehovah, the LORD, says, "By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked: *Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear.* They will say of me, 'In the LORD alone are righteousness and strength.' All who have raged against him will come to him and be put to shame. But in the LORD all the descendants of Israel will be found righteous and will exult."

Here in Isaiah it is the LORD, Jehovah, to whom every knee shall bow. In Phippians it is Jesus to whom every knee will bow. This is just one reference among very many where Paul takes a verse in the Old Testament referring to Jehovah, the LORD, and applies it to Jesus. That is because to Paul, Jesus is Jehovah.

Nonetheless, we are left with the obvious, that Jesus prayed to the Father as though the Father was a

distinct person, and God. So we have Jesus regarded as God, and we have the Father regarded as God, yet they are distinct persons. They share one Godship.

## The Exact Imprint of God's Very Being

Let's consider another couple of sections of Scripture before concluding this investigation. First, let's look again at the first chapter of Hebrews, where the writer turns our attention to Jesus and says in verse 3, "He is the reflection of God's glory and the *exact imprint of God's very being*, and he sustains all things by his powerful word." Let me ask you this question: Is that how your spiritual leaders talk? Do they remind you of the glorious, exalted stature of the Son of God? Or do they spend their time telling you what Jesus is not?

Read the letters of any of the apostles and tell me anywhere that any of them speak in denigrating terms of Jesus. None of them do that. They all spend their efforts exalting the name of Jesus. Any honest, conscious JW will have to admit that most references to Jesus by the WT are of his supposedly "not this," and "not that."

Let's look at Paul's references to Jesus in Colossians 1:15 - 20. "He [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers – all things have been created through him and *for him*. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. *For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell*, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross."

Again I ask, are you accustomed to such praise being

heaped on the name of Jesus? The only explanation that seems honest and truthful is that Jesus, the Son of God, is God himself. This is the only way that Matthew 28:19 makes sense: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them *in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*."

As C. S. Lewis so interestingly observed, God is love. But love implies another. Love is something you have and express to another entity, another person. If there was a time when the Son did not exist, when God the Father was all alone, then there was a time when God was not love, because love requires an object. In the beauty of the Godhead, God has been eternally love, for the Father loves the Son and Holy Spirit; the Son loves the Father and the Holy Spirit; and the Holy Spirit loves the Father and the Son. There is no competition going on between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. They are one in perfect love and harmony and existence.

This is much longer than I expected it to become. Yet it is not even a scratch of the mountain of Scripture reference establishing the teaching that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. I have written in another place of the personality of the Holy Spirit, so I won't include that here. I hope that what is here written will be of assistance in appreciating the beauty of the heavenly relationship which exists in our God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

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