

The Rock

A
"Born Again Baptism"
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**From
Atheist to
Born
Again**

**The Church
Of the
Apostles**

**Is
Jesus
God?**





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Letter from the Editor

Have you ever been called to do something you didn't want to do? There's nothing more frustrating than thinking you have a better path of success than the one that has been mandated for you. This is how it's often presented when God shows you his Will for you and how he wants you to live your life in service to him.



We have been given a task to present the "Truth" in scripture no matter how it will cause problems with the rest of the world. Especially within the Christian community. You see, when you truly begin to desire nothing but the Will of God in your life, God has a way of making that desire come true. He won't always bring you the desires of your flesh, but I can guarantee you he will always bring you the desires of the Spirit. The most important subject in everyone's life comes in the Gospel of John, Chapter 3. Jesus tells Nicodemus we must be born of both Water and Spirit. Nicodemus doesn't understand this teaching because he was not "Born Again".

Two things happen when you become "Born Again" by receiving the Holy Spirit. The first is that you begin to question many of the teachings you have come to accept because someone with more theological learning than you told you so. Most likely it came from your Pastor or another Elder in the Church. Or maybe you believed some teachings because everyone else did as well. When you start to question these teachings, the best thing happens at that point. God will most likely bring you around someone else who is "Born Again" to discuss these things. The best Scripture is in Proverbs 27:17 which talks about Iron sharpening Iron. That's when the Truth of scripture really starts to jump out at you and you begin to see how the leadership of the Church is really leading people astray.

I'm not saying all Church Leaders and Pastors are bad people. I do believe most of them have been led astray themselves and don't know any better. Some of the many topics about salvation in scripture are misrepresented. Topics like, is Jesus God? Once Saved always Saved. What does the Church gathering look like? What does it mean to know the Will of God? These are just a few of the topics we will begin to tackle and use scripture to present the Truth. Don't ever take man's word for God's Truth. Man's word is useless and perverted. Trust only the Words of God found in Scripture and allow the Holy Spirit to invade your life to teach you all things Jesus. This is not a complicated program. It's actually very simple in nature (see 2 Corinthians 11:3). To summarize the New Testament: be not deceived.

How Did Jesus Establish the Church?

If you look at the present structure of the Church, I struggle to find anywhere in scripture that models its current existence. The only place that I can find in scripture on how the Church was established and operated is in the Book of Acts. In the account of Acts 2:44-47; “Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.”

This was seen again in Acts 4:32-37. What Jesus established here through the Apostles was first the Home Church. The gathering of the Saints began in their homes. These gatherings were small maybe 10 to 12 people. The gatherings were Holy Spirit led. There were not sermons being prepared each week by a Pastor delivered in a big building. The body operated as one together in Christ through small gatherings. They did not work individually. It went so far as each Saint not thinking any of their possessions were their own. They saw themselves as part of the Church and that what they owned belonged to where they belonged. The Church itself. Scripture then talks about distributions being made as needed and no one went without. The Church, a body of people, was the most important thing. Not individualism. God wants us to believe that we are one body through his Son Jesus Christ and that we surrender ourselves completely to that way of life. That is really the exact opposite of how we live today.



You see this type of lifestyle in communist countries. Any American Citizen would absolutely oppose such an idea. But what you see in other countries doesn't benefit the Church, which is the Body of Saints. It benefits the ruling government of that land. That's why it becomes corrupt because of the benefactor of the system. The Apostles, who were the leaders of the newly established Church did not become a government over the Church. They were the implementers of the ideal. Not the benefactors. Scripture said that distributions were made as needed and no one went without. That sounds pretty perfect in its way of operating. No one went without. How many people go without today? How many people have too much?

This model of growth was unstoppable for over 300 years. Small Churches popping up all over the world. Rome couldn't stop it no matter what they did. Finding these Churches was very difficult in itself because of its natural camouflage of homes and small gatherings. A church would reach a certain size, maybe 18 people and then split forming two more churches to doubling in size. Those churches would then grow and split creating a multiplying house of God that could not be compromised or slowed by the world. This is how God intended Church to be. A body of people that gathered as one in small groups that grew beyond comprehension with no sense of individualism. While at the same time providing for all the needs of every member of the Church body. That's how the Church grew to such huge numbers all over the world and it could not be stopped. A Genius design!



I was listening to a PodCast of a Pastor talking about America being founded and grown through an ideal called "Rugged Individualism". This was very alarming, because the idea of what that name implies is exactly the opposite of how the early Church was founded. This is a member of our current Christian Leadership professing an ideal that is the opposite of God's ideals and presenting them as Truth. One problem with today's leadership in the Church is the lack of keeping the message deeply rooted in scripture principles. Once we allow the ideals of the world to infiltrate and dilute the ideals of scripture, we begin a false teaching that is very dangerous.

What causes us to be misled in how we present scripture? Especially when it comes to basic scriptural ideals? It's the lack of the Holy Spirit in the person teaching that allows us to go away from basic Truth and fall into our own ideologies and beliefs. What's happened to our Church Leadership is nothing short of a worldly perspective when it comes to the Church. We seem to be more concerned with the amount of people in the congregation and the building where the congregation meets than we do the message. That problem is eliminated by Home Church. The Truth in scripture is not always a feel-good message. Most of the time it isn't. That doesn't mean that scriptural Truth is not meant to feel good. Jesus wants us to have all the Fruits of the Spirit which are Joy, Peace, Love, Patience, Self Control, Goodness and Kindness. If you have those, then you should feel pretty good, right? But the feel-good message being preached revolves more around financial success, relational bliss and many other worldly ideals that are bestowed upon us as the American ideal. Maybe referred to as "Rugged Individualism" or "Freedom" or "Success" or any other way to express power and control in this world. The Truth is not about power and control. It's about submission, giving, and most importantly Love. Those ideals don't drive us to success in this world as the world sees it. It drives us to success in the eyes of the Father who intended us to be a United Church, serving as one body and living as one body. Just as the Apostles intended it from the start.

The current Church Leadership continues to focus on a diluted message of Truth so it's presented in a way to grow church attendance and support a physical building rather than a body of people. So what do we do now? How do we get back to the original intention of the Church and how it is to be structured? That's a really good question. It starts with two people. Two people coming together and saying I want what God intended for our Church and setting up a Home Church based on those ideals.



These two people need to be Holy Spirit filled and allow the Holy Spirit to guide the structure and growth of this Church. A Church that is focused on the Body of Believers not the church numbers. Home Churches will max out at 10 to 12 people so the numbers for each Church don't matter. The building for each Church is a Born Again Believer's home so the building is not an issue. The only thing that matters in the Home Church model is the Truth! The Truth will then grow the Church beyond imagination bringing a revival to the Church Community that is so desperately needed today. The answer to change starts with you. Seek the Lord on knowing what he wants for his Church. Ask him to

surround you with like minded people who are filled with the Holy Spirit. Come together as one in a Body of Christ and begin building a Church that is designed by God and ordained by God. Stop conforming to the world. Conform to God!



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Being “Born Again” in the Holy Spirit

One of the most common teachings in the Church today is that you receive the Holy Spirit at Water Baptism: that when you receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, the Holy Spirit comes upon you and lives within you at the same time. As you study the scriptures, you see clearly that is not always the case. The Truth is it can happen that way, but for most people it doesn't, if it even happens at all. Let's unpeel this onion a little further.

The most obvious example is Jesus himself. Jesus was 30 years old before he received the Holy Spirit. He obviously received Jesus Christ because that's who he was. But it wasn't until he was Baptized by John the Baptist did he receive the Holy Spirit. Jesus went 30 years without the Holy Spirit. The only Begotten Son of God himself. No Holy Spirit until the age of 30.



Next are the Apostles. These are 12 individuals who spent 3 years with Jesus. Jesus had the Holy Spirit, but the Apostles did not. I think it's safe to say that they received Jesus as the Messiah and accepted him as their Lord and Savior. That's why they followed him. They identified him as the Messiah. But it wasn't until Pentecost, after Jesus had ascended into Heaven, that they received the Holy Spirit according to the Book of Acts.

In Chapter 10 of Acts there was a Centurion named Cornelius. He was told to send for Peter to instruct him on his Faith by an Angel from God. Peter was summoned after being on the roof of a house as God showed him that the Holy Spirit was meant for the Gentiles as well. Cornelius and his household were already following Christ at the time and when Peter asked them if they had received the Holy Spirit they said they had not.



Peter then laid hands on them, and they all received the Holy Spirit. These are just three examples that you can receive Jesus without having received the Holy Spirit. If anyone is teaching something different then they are teaching a false doctrine.

The most important chapter in the Bible is John 3. This chapter talks about what it means to be “Born Again.” Jesus is telling Nicodemus that you must be Baptized in both Water and Spirit to enter the Kingdom of God. Two different Baptisms. Both Water and Spirit. The Water Baptism is the accepting of Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. An outward expression of who you are in Christ. The second, the Baptism of the the Spirit, is being Baptized in the Holy Spirit. Just as the three previous examples given were at different times in their walk. Understanding that you can receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and not have the Holy Spirit is possible and is one of the biggest problems with our Church today.

What do I mean by problems in the Church? The problem is that most of our Christian Community very well may be “Saved” but not “Born Again”. That means they received Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior but have never received the Holy Spirit. They may think they have the Holy Spirit but, in reality they do not. This is achieved by telling a new Believer that they automatically receive the Holy Spirit upon water Baptism. Thus they have no need to continue to seek and desire the Holy Spirit within them.



The Holy Spirit is referred to in Scripture as the “Spirit of Truth.” If you have the Holy Spirit, you are a “Born Again” Believer, and the Truth in Scripture becomes the most powerful reality in your life. The Truth becomes an obsession. Something you never stop seeking. Sin becomes utterly disgusting to you. Lies that you have been told over the years about Christianity become very apparent. Seeking and doing God’s Will is the most important thing in your life. Living in this world becomes an obligation not a desire. Your entire being becomes about Jesus, and you want nothing more than to be with him in Heaven. The Apostle Paul expresses this when he says: “ For to me to live is Christ, and to Die is gain” (Philippians 1:21). Paul wanted to be in Heaven more than he wanted to be on this earth, no matter what pleasures this world can bring. Your wife, your children, your job, nothing is more important than being with Christ. Show me that person, and I will show you someone who is “Born Again”.



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What does a Farrier possess that a Banker does not? Does a Farrier have something a Waitress can't possess? Maybe a Tile Installer lacks what a Farrier has for Kingdom purposes. Or maybe it has nothing to do with what you do for a living but how you live your life. I think that's a more accurate statement. Parrish Preston is a Farrier. But shoeing horses has nothing to do with who he is as a man and as a Slave to Christ Jesus. That's right, a Slave. Not a Servant. The Bible Translators use that instead of Slave when the proper translation is just that. A Slave!

Being a Slave to Jesus Christ doesn't sound like that it's much fun. If you ask Parrish, he'll tell you it's not about having fun, it's about knowing the Will of God and actively executing it as your daily lifestyle. But how do you know God's Will in your life? Parrish struggles with that question everyday. He goes to bed each night seeking God's Will for himself and wakes up each morning doing the same. I talk to him extensively about this issue, and he is never satisfied that he is actually living and working in the Will of God.



That's actually a really good space to be in. Constantly seeking God for his Will in your life. That's probably the exact opposite of how or Church views their Works for God today. Most people have no idea of God's Will for them, because they don't ever seek him for that answer. I've encountered so many people who do works unto the Lord in the manner in which they feel they can be most effective. Or, as I see the majority of the Church: we don't do anything at all in terms of living in God's Will. Receiving Jesus as their Lord and Savior and trying to live a good life is about as far as it goes. Jesus becomes a feel-good program for these people and only bring Him out of the box when He's needed.

That's not the way it is for Parrish. I can attest to that from experience. I'm around him enough to see that his every desire is to know God's Truth and have that Truth work in him and through him. It's almost irritating to see the extent his pursuit of God's Word can bring him to frustration, because he's constantly evaluating who he is in Jesus Christ. Again, probably a pretty good place to be, because God will honor that type of commitment to him and his Son Jesus.

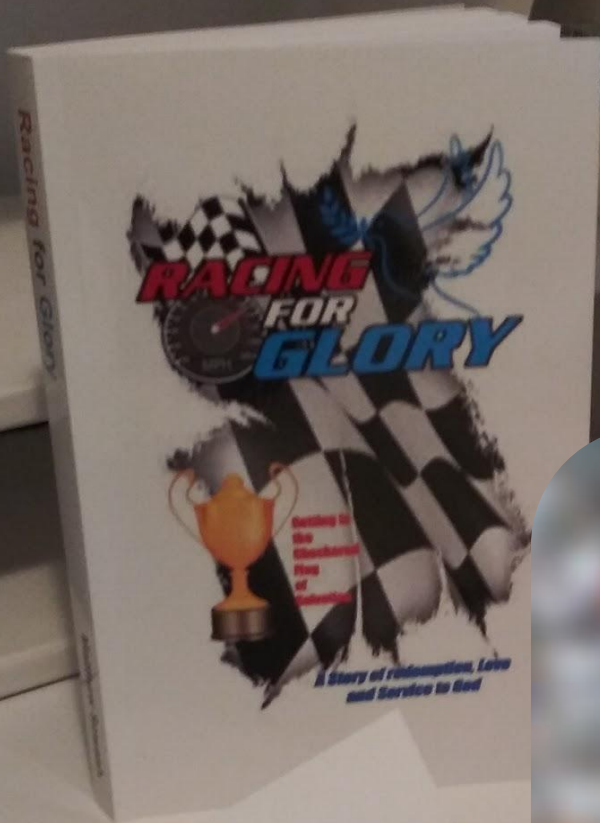
How can this type of relentless pursuit of Christ make a difference in the Kingdom of God? Let's look at it this way. God made every single person ever born for a purpose. That means when he made you, it wasn't because he had some spare parts lying around and decided to put another person together, send him or her down to earth, and just exist without any direction or guidance. That's certainly not God's ways. You were created for a purpose. A purpose that matters. The only reason you might not be living by that purpose is that you never asked God what that purpose was. I see that in Parrish every single day. He is constantly seeking purpose with a desire to live by that purpose. That doesn't mean he doesn't seek other things as well. He desires a wife. He desires children. He desires a job that is productive and produces a means of support for himself. He desires to build up his slender 155 pound frame to a strong 185 pound strong man (I guess he wants to look good for his future wife). But with all those desires, his first and most sought-after desire is living by the Will of God. A trait so sorely lost in our Church today.

By no means is Parrish special or any more important than you or me to our Father in Heaven. God Loves him just the same as he Loves us no matter what's in his heart. What I do know is, I admire his heart for what he is seeking in our Lord Jesus Christ. I admire that he is not satisfied with a lackluster day that didn't really produce any fruit for the Kingdom. I admire that he is constantly seeking the Word of God for Truth. I admire his frustration when he's not sure if he's heard from God or not. I admire him for who he is in Christ.

So we get back to the original question. Can being a Farrier make a difference in the Kingdom. The answer is no. The only way to make a difference in the Kingdom is to seek all things Kingdom in Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior!



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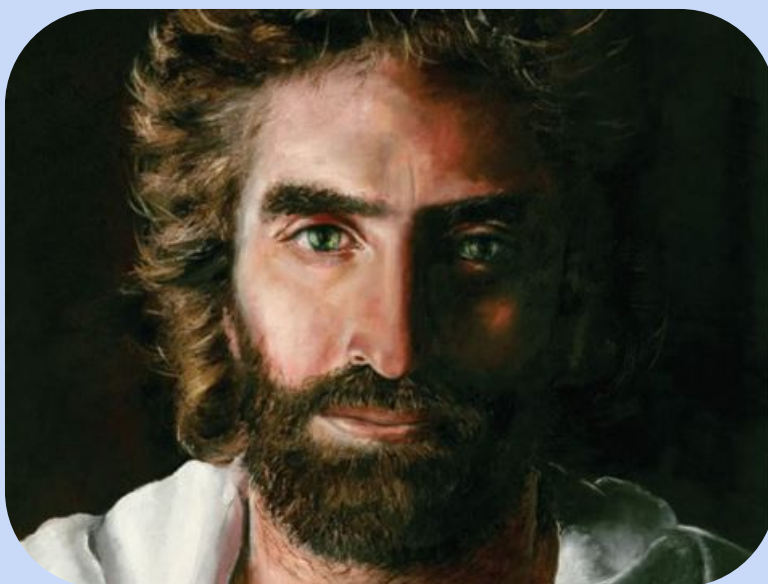


**Matthew Sowash
"Little Bro Peeps"**

Is Jesus God?

Before we tackle the single most important question of human being's life (who you say Jesus is), we must first dispel the fallacy of the Trinity. This can be accomplished quite easily. All one must do is ignore the "traditions of men" and let Scripture say what Scripture says. Don't read into it; don't question it; don't try to create a theology from it. Just believe what it says and accept the Word of God at face value. If you woke up after your first 30 years of life as an atheist and read the Bible for the first-time cover to cover (which is what happened to me), you would find no verses in Scripture that support the man-made doctrine of the Trinity. I chose to believe the Bible for what the Bible says and not what a denomination or a pastor or a priest teaches.

As an atheist, I found myself having an advantage getting Born Again over many of my peers who have been lifelong Christians. Waking up out of a multi-decade godless stupor actually allowed me to avoid the lies and hypocrisy that defines the majority of Christendom, especially American Christianity.



Fed-up and overwhelmed with a meaningless existence, I was desperate for the Truth over anything else: is the story of Jesus Christ true or just that, a story made up like everything else to make us feel better about the fact that we will all be in the ground eaten by worms. For me, my question was answered supernaturally by God Himself. For nearly two days I was visited by the Holy Spirit in the form of a spiritual, miraculous Love that revealed God's existence to me.

Which brings me back to the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit each being equated with a "personhood" of God). All we must do to negate this unnecessary doctrine is challenge one of the three legs: if only one of the three pillars of the Trinity does not hold water, then the entire concept falls apart. Is the Trinity confusing? Absolutely. I'm a Born Again, Spirit-filled, tongues-talking, follower of Jesus Christ. Why am I confused by the Trinity? Because it is confusing and is designed to confuse. "For God is not the author of confusion" (1 Corinthians 14:33) Paul tells us God does not create confusion; by implication the Evil One does.

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What else do we know about God. Let's look at what Jesus says about who His Father is: "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). Point blank, Jesus tells us that God is a Spirit, *not the Holy Spirit* (emphasis added). If the Holy Spirit was the third person of the Trinity, why wouldn't Jesus have said "God is the Holy Spirit?" And while He was at it, why wouldn't He have added, "And God is the Father, and even though I'm His only begotten Son, I am also God."

But let's keep examining the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit. Apparently, the Holy Spirit is not the only spirit that is identified as a "Spirit of God." Isaiah prophesies that Jesus will possess ALL SEVEN spirits of God: "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord" (Isaiah 11:2 KJV). The Septuagint text includes εὐσεβείας ("piety" or "godliness") which is not included in the Masoretic translation, but Jesus Himself confirms that there are 7 Spirits of God and He has them all: "And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead" (Revelation 3:1 KJV).



What else do we know about these Seven Spirits of God? "And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God" (Revelation 4:5). "And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth" (Revelation 5:6).

We learn from John in Revelation that the 7 Spirits are seven lamps of burning fire before the Throne of God and the seven eyes of Jesus which are sent into all the earth. It appears the Holy Spirit is inextricably linked with the other six spirits, so if the Spirit of God is a person of the Godhead, why wouldn't the other six also be six other persons of the Godhead? Why isn't that a doctrine that is taught? Wouldn't that make the Trinity more like an Ennead? Or a Nonuple? Or a nine-fold God? Or how about a Nonagon God!

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Now let's look at what Scripture says about who Jesus is. Just pure Word. Is Jesus trying to trick us? No, the Evil One is. Let's start with perhaps the most popular verse of the Bible: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16 KJV). God did not sacrifice Himself for the world; He sacrificed His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ for the world. It is like we are afraid to let Jesus be who He is: not God, but God's Son, our Lord and Savior, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Can't we take Jesus at His own Word? "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me" (John 14:1). If people believe in God, wouldn't that mean they also already believe in Jesus, who is supposedly God, not to mention the Holy Spirit, who is also supposedly God? Why would Jesus need to give an additional commandment to believe in Him? Because He is the Son of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

In one of his last prayers before the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus doesn't waste His breath with unnecessary words: "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3 KJV). Jesus clarifies the path to eternal life: knowing the one true and only Living God and His son Jesus whom He sent to serve as the blood-atonement for our sin. To claim Jesus as God is to deny BOTH: it is to NOT know the only true God and NOT know Jesus whom He sent. Thomas finally understood what Jesus said, "And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God" (John 20:17). It is a much simpler explanation to acknowledge what is actually happening in this scene: Thomas is finally recognizing our God the Father and Jesus our Lord and Savior, separately, just as Jesus commanded we must do. John doubles down: "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:30-31). John implores us to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God, not God the Son. If you deny Jesus in this life, He will deny you before God in the next: "But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 10:33).

Let's look at what the early Church, apostles, and writers of the New Testament had to say about the distinction between Jesus and God the Father. "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God" (1 Corinthians 11:3 KJV). Paul's language seems pretty clear when you let his words say exactly what they are saying. Jesus is to have divine Lordship over every man, and Jesus Himself submits to only one authority: God the Father. (Un)ironically, in the 11th chapter and 3rd verse of his second letter to the Corinthians, it's almost as if Paul precisely calls back to his explanation "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:3). Is it not possible that Paul wrote this so that theologically

unnecessary and potentially dangerous doctrines like the Trinity would not come about? Is the Trinity not convoluted and confusing? Yet it should be the exact opposite.

Following Christ is SIMPLE (though dare I say not easy). Believe Jesus is the Son of God who died for your sins, be baptized of water and Spirit, and surrender your life to the Father's will. Make disciples of all nations and encourage them to do the same. That's it. That's the program. When does Jesus command us to go to seminary? Or acquire useless degrees and letters in theology? Or debate Atheists about the merits of the Bible or evidence of God? What Jesus does demand we do is repent, be Born Again, and constantly seek the Father's will for our lives. Simple, not easy.

What else does Paul say about the distinction between God and Jesus? "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5). What's simpler and more plausible? To allow Paul's words to say exactly what they mean as they are stated, OR to insert a man-made parenthetical theological fabrication that even though Paul doesn't explicitly state it outright, he's only referring to the "human-essence" of Jesus while separating the "God-nature" of Christ? Really? Paul, who made it his mission of his life to dispel false doctrine, wouldn't have spent ink here expounding upon the Trinity if it existed? If we believe the Holy Spirit inspired the words of Scripture, why wouldn't it say exactly what needs to be said in the way it was exactly said? The argument that "God wants us to infer the Trinity from the text" is absurd. I've heard from so many pastors and Christians: "You don't have to understand it, you just have to believe it." Really? Where's that in Scripture? God wants to be understood. God wants to be sought by His children. God wants us to know Him. This is only possible because God sent Jesus to be our advocate and propitiation for our sin (2 John 1-2 KJV). I serve and worship a knowable God, and I serve and worship His knowable Son: "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13).



Let's turn to Paul's own words for the doctrine he taught concerning God and His Christ: "and that there is none other God but one. For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him. Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge" (1 Corinthians 8:4-7 KJV). Paul is painfully clear: there is ONE God (The Father) and ONE Lord (Jesus Christ). It's almost like Paul (through the Holy Spirit) was preemptively trying to prevent false doctrine like the Trinity from coming about. He wanted pagans, atheists, and Christians alike to recognize the one true God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ (the same admission Jesus makes in John 17:3). If Paul means anything besides this, then Scripture contradicts itself, and we are most of all to be pitied (to paraphrase 1 Corinthians 15:19).

The Trinity is a cop-out, a theological talking point to excuse ourselves from the responsibility of actively seeking the heart of the Father and following Jesus every day of our lives. The Trinity has found great success amidst a "set it and forget it" Christianity, or an "NFL-Sunday" American Christianity. Where's our hunger for God and His Son? We're satisfied to blindly accept the traditions of men over the Word of God? I spent nearly the first 30 years of my life marinating in the lies of this world and atheism. Why would The Church and the Word of God not be immune from attack by the Evil One? He's the father of lies; why would his lies not be able to penetrate the walls of a seminary school or a cathedral or a Sunday school classroom? If Jesus commanded we must worship God in spirit and in truth, then we must confront and eradicate worship that occurs in the flesh and in lies.

Once you have been baptized in the Holy Spirit (you would know if you were), lies disgust you. Once you have tasted Truth and the Spirit of Truth, that is all you want to consume. I am obsessed with Truth. "But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him" (1 John 2:27). John is only quoting what Jesus said: "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26). If every Christian truly had the Holy Spirit leading them, what need would we have of seminaries, Bible colleges, or vapid catechisms?



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