

Theology 1.8 - Trinity

The Theology of the New Testament – what is really going on? How is Diachronic Theology framed and forwarded? What are some of the important issues?

1. Gospel of Jesus:

- a. Rich young ruler – Mat 19:16ff & Lk 10:25ff – What do I need to do to inherit eternal life? You need to carefully read the text and understand what is being said.
 - i. The question is asked from the perspective of a successful and rich Jew – because Jews who were blessed were presumed to be favored and loved by God... they had it made. This man who knows of his inheritance of the earthly kingdom, but Jesus speaks of something beyond the here and now, and he demonstrates that wants more – he wants to enter the heavenly Kingdom of God.
 - ii. This question is asked from the perspective of one under the law, before the gospel has been fully given... the atonement secured by Messiah’s death, resurrection, & Pentecost are yet to be revealed.
 - iii. Gospel centered ministry understands the place of the atonement and grace – denying yourself and following Christ sacrificially is important... but the cross and resurrection changes everything.
 - iv. How does faith, confidence, joy, hope, etc. come together in balance of the cross?
 - v. There is a call from God that is balanced by our human response – we are not automatons, we are co-regents in God’s service and under God’s direction by the Spirit.
 - vi. The rich young ruler knew what was expected under the law and had complied with it... now he is reaching for eternity. The price of eternity is everything... but what you gain is infinitely greater.
 - vii. The text contrasts of the rich young ruler who had everything in terms of the world but sought to justify himself and went away saddened, and the thief on the cross next to Jesus are telling – the thief had nothing and hope had left the building. It was Jesus or nothing. He knew his need... and threw himself on mercy, and Jesus accepted him. The “righteous one is thus condemned, and the condemned one is pronounced righteous. Such is the economy of Grace in the Kingdom of God.”
- b. Call of God – Ezekiel, Isaiah, Jeremiah – all had impressive supernatural calls given along with a warning from God of their responsibility. John the Baptist

was the last in the line of the classic OT prophets. He prepared the way for Jesus and affirmed His coming as the Messiah.

- i. Church leaders, teachers and preachers have a greater responsibility and accountability before God – grace is supreme, but personal accountability is also at play. Leaders need to be bathed in prayer and covered with humility.
- ii. The teaching and application of grace without the balance of the understanding and conviction of personal sin is an unbalanced message. The Gospel has the two are inextricably intertwined.
- iii. What then is the relationship of your life with Jesus in the light of the Gospel? Can works be separated from faith? No... they are intrinsically integrated, but faith will save you while works alone will not. True faith lived purposefully before God must result in action – things done to advance the Kingdom. Grace = faith in action.

2. Grace:

- a. Who you are in Jesus – Romans 12-13 – the cross reveals that self sacrifice is an out working of grace – both in my life and in the world I live in.
- b. It is not suffering when you appropriate and apply grace in your life and context, and realize your personal connection to the suffering of Christ and His saints. We should never seek to suffer... but should suffering find us, if we can see God's Grace fingerprints in the midst... the knowing that we are entering into sacred ground with Jesus' example of the suffering servant is great consolation and hope. It makes no sense to the non-believer... but makes perfect sense to the disciple of Jesus. If you are blessed with a good life... it is Grace, if you are asked to endure suffering... it is Grace.
- c. Where Romans 12 is about my freedom in my identity in Christ, Romans 13 is about my personal restraint in light of what Christ has done for me – this is the balance of Grace.
- d. Paul is writing about the balance of grace and prohibitive sin.

3. Worship – in Spirit and Truth:

- a. Sophia (Σοφία, Greek for "wisdom") is a central term in Hellenistic philosophy and religion, Platonism, Gnosticism, Orthodox Christianity, Esoteric Christianity, as well as Christian mysticism. Sophiology is a philosophical concept regarding wisdom, as well as a theological concept regarding the wisdom of God.
- b. Chokmah (Hebrew for wisdom) appears alongside the 'Shekhinah Glory of God', a figure who plays a key role in the cosmology of the Kabbalists as an

expression of the feminine aspect of God. It is a central topic in the "wisdom writings" – canonical books that includes Proverbs, Psalms, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, and Job; and the non-canonical books of the Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, and to some extent Baruch (the last three are Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical books of the Old Testament.)

- c. Wisdom's Feast – Sophia in Study and Celebration – book written by Susan Cole, Marian Ronan, Hal Taussig (2 Methodists and a Catholic theologian) asks some provocative questions about God. Is there equality in gender in God? Equally male and female, or having some or a blend of both masculine and feminine characteristics?
 - d. Wisdom is personified in Proverbs and is often referred to as a woman – wisdom is used 47 times in Proverbs alone. Proverbs 31 is the embodiment of wisdom as the righteous wife.
 - e. While being made in the image of God obviously involves both male & female aspects, the text invites thought of God as male and female – rather than simply having masculine and feminine characteristics – worshiping God in gender thinking ways is wrong... just as thinking of Jesus as the groom and the church as His bride wrongly evokes sexual thoughts in Western thinking. Instead, it is the relational unity and completion that is the point of the analogy, not the physical unity.
 - f. As we work out our own personal theology through our studies of Scripture in light of our personal experiences with God – remember to take a step back and review your thinking – does it reflect what you know of the NT gospel? Do your thoughts make sense in light of the God we know and the Gospel revealed?
4. Trinity Revealed:
- a. Heavenly Throne Room worship scenes are revealed in Scripture – especially in Ezekiel, Daniel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Revelation.
 - i. These scenes are not to be taken literally – they are majestic images where we are reliving the awe invoked by the author's experience. With God
 - ii. The author probably didn't understand what he was 'seeing' – mostly that it was great, terrible, and awe inspiring – this is a way that portrays God's Majesty and Otherness. Seen in this perspective, God is amazing, wondrous, and beyond any human context. That such a God would love humanity in general and me in particular is an amazing realization of Grace.

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- iii. Ezek 1:4-5 – relates a scene where 4 ‘living beings’ are in motion – it is described much like a mobile moving above an infants’ crib:
 - 1. 4 living creatures with 4 faces – and 4 wings
 - 2. Wheels in motion with an expanse above
 - 3. Throne positioned majestically above the expanse
 - 4. ONE ‘like a man’ on the Throne – Imago Dei... humanity as the image of God evokes a relational bridge.
- iv. Rev 4 – describes a fixed scene in heaven:
 - 1. Scene 1:
 - a. 24 elders – seated on thrones with crowns of their own
 - b. 4 living creatures with eyes all around & 6 wings
 - c. God the Creator is the central character – worthy of glory, honor and worship.
 - d. Worship of God is for who He is and for what He has done – worship is in song. God the Father is center stage.
 - e. God is holding a book that no one can open – how can all-powerful God not open a book? This is not literal writing; it is the language of poetry – rich with imagery and emotion.
 - 2. Scene 2:
 - a. Lamb that was slain
 - b. Takes the book from God’s right hand
 - c. Praise issues forth – worthy is the Lamb with all creation and myriads in heaven praising the Son.
 - d. The Son is now center stage in the Heavenly Throne room – and is the center and focus of Heavenly worship.
 - e. Son is praised for His redemptive act – this is the central focus which is Grace – redemption.
 - f. Trinity is present, but focus is on the Son. Note that there is no conflict in the worship of the Trinity – God as Father, Son, and Spirit are worshipped as appropriate.
 - 3. Scene 3 – chap 21-22
 - a. New Heaven & new earth – things are now as they were intended to be with God and man together in bliss. This is the restoration of things promised in the Garden.
 - b. Throne of God and the Lamb demonstrates the unity of God – Father & Son & Spirit are ONE and present among humanity.

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- iii. Believed in a strict Calvinistic theology – even hyper-Calvinist thought developed.
- c. When evaluating gospel perspectives:
 - i. What is the relative importance of what we believe and what we do?
 - ii. Is correct belief better than correct living before God?
 - iii. What does God expect of us in His service?
 - iv. What is more honoring to God – simple faith, correct theology and belief, correct action, a combination, etc?
- d. When evaluating the importance of the Spirit, understanding balance, priorities, and boundaries is very important:
 - i. Beware of the extremes – there is a recognizable gradient for evaluating theologies of the Spirit from the right (most conservative) to the left (most liberal). The far right essentially hold that the work of the Spirit is reduced to illumination and conviction, with the church shepherding the faithful. The middle holds that the Spirit is fully in play as He was in NT times, and integrates all life, knowledge and practice. The far left holds that deliverance & healings and such are the norm, and that authoritative revelation continues through the auspices of the indwelling Spirit.
 - 1. John MacArthur – Charismatic Chaos - #1 on the far right.
 - 2. Tony Evans – The Promise - #2.
 - 3. Who's Afraid of the Spirit - #3.
 - 4. The Bondage Breaker - #4.
 - 5. Chuck Smith – Living Power – Power of the Holy Spirit in your Life - #5.
 - 6. John Wimber, Cindy Jacobs, Charles Kraft - #8.
 - 7. Osborn – Healing the Sick – #9 – along with Benny Hinn, etc.
 - 8. James Rule – A Dream Come True - #10 – essentially believes that God is speaking through everything around us; our dreams & thought life are divine communications no matter how outlandish they may seem, etc.
 - ii. The far right tends to have rigid boundaries but no spiritual vibrancy.
 - iii. The far left has spiritual vibrancy but no boundaries.
- e. What are reasonable guidelines for evaluating spiritual reality and God's Calling?
 - i. God reveals Himself, but not every day of one's life.
 - 1. Look for God, even expect God to show up – but don't expect that He will direct every step or every action you take.

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2. God has appointed us as co-regents – He wants our input and output – we have something to say about how you want to serve Him.
 3. God will always give direction – especially about the important things... we need to be mindful and pay attention.
 4. God rarely has one authoritative plan for our life... He desires us to walk with Him, and allow Him to guide us through the wonder that we call life and service.
- ii. What is the relation between ‘Overt’ and ‘Covert’ interaction?
1. Overt – God is directly involved and engaged.
 2. Covert – God is working through things indirectly.
 3. Combination – is healthy and most probable. Far right holds to covert only, far left to overt only. Neither extreme reads true.
- iii. Dr Louie’s advice:
1. I allow God to do whatever He would have me do... my focus is upon obedience to Him.
 - a. Awareness and obedience are the center of life with God.
 - b. We are to know the Truth and be disciplined by it.
 - c. The Great commandment and the Great Commission are the center of Christian life:
 - i. Great Commandment – love God, love others.
 - ii. Great Commission – evangelism and discipleship.
 2. Study the Word to discover the parameters of how God works:
 - a. Strong prophetic calls were given to Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Moses; while Jeremiah, Samuel and John the Baptist were chosen before birth. Paul also had a strong ministry call, with the responsibility that he HAD to PREACH the WORD... woe to him if he did not.
 - b. Moses had several 180° turns in his ministry – 40 years a prince in Egypt, 40 years a shepherd in Midian, 40 years a prophet-leader of Israel.
 - c. Strong calls often come with 180° turns, but we only have a few in a lifetime – we don’t reasonably make radical changes frequently.
 - i. Occasionally God comes in and changes the trajectory of your life.

- ii. Most often as you walk with God in obedience and sensitivity, He will help direct and redirect your steps.
 - d. Calls come in accordance with God's revealed will.
 - e. Calls often are associated where deliverance and mercy result through obedience.
 - f. Leading usually involves personal sacrifice, and benefits to others.
 - g. Leading will usually be in conjunction with our individual giftedness, personality, desires, etc. It is extremely rare and should generally be distrusted if otherwise.
- 3. Some of the greatest things you will experience and do will result from allowing God to operate through all of these spheres of influence.
- 4. When involved in counseling others through tough choices:
 - a. Avoid taking control of another's life and purpose and direct them with what you think they should do. Our calling is to aid them in discovering what God is asking them to do... this is a huge difference.
 - b. The most common difficult decisions involve choice of school/career, and choice of spouse.
 - c. Love is a very difficult matter to evaluate and choose as it is such a powerful emotion, second only to hate and fear.
 - d. Take a step back and take a hard discerning look at things.
 - e. Search out and look for applications of Scriptural precepts and examples.
 - f. Remember the distinctions between counseling [when someone really needs insightful help] and coaching [when someone only needs a faithful committed individual to keep them focused on what they know they should be doing].
 - g. Sometimes all we need to do is listen and pray with them... and allow God to reveal what He is up to. Resist the temptation to push people forward... encourage them to follow God.
- 5. Miraculous things will happen when you least expect it.

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6. "Parable of the Talents" is illustrative of a Christian's responsibility to make the right decision:
- You have been entrusted with something of great value.
 - You've been commanded to properly manage it.
 - God expects you to figure it out – with dependence to Him.
 - God will not expect you to more than what you are capable of, but He does expect you to make a concerted and appropriate effort.

6. Theology of the Trinity:

a. Classic Thinking:

	Jesus	Each Person	Each Person	Unity of
<u>TYPE:</u>	<u>ETERNALITY</u>	<u>DIVINE</u>	<u>Distinct Role</u>	<u>Essence/purpose</u>
Arianism	no	no	yes	no
Modalism	yes	yes	no	yes
Trinitarianism	yes	yes	yes	yes

- Arianism – is like Jehovah's Witnesses – Jesus is considered an angel, not God. Jesus is a created being or even the chief of created beings, but not God. These folks have rewritten Scripture to justify their heretical thinking... this is not Christian faith. These folks are likely going to hell.
 - Modalism – 'Oneness Pentecostalism' – T.D. Jakes – United Pentecostal Church – Jesus is one with God, but God is of "3 manifestations" rather than "3 distinct persons." Issues arise with the baptism of Jesus – Scripture reports that all 3 Persons were involved, not one manifestation. Same of the cross & resurrection & Pentecost. They hold that Jesus was a man and "became God" when the Spirit came upon him. The Spirit left him on the cross which is why he cried "why have you forsaken me?" Though not orthodoxy, and not Biblical – these folks understand the atonement and redemption.
- b. Classic Study of Trinitarianism:
- Find all the verses that either state or infer more than one person of God.
 - Break down these verses by those demonstrating God's:
 - Character
 - Works
 - Attributes

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- iii. How does the Trinity work in your life? How and when do you distinguish between the Persons?
- iv. How does the Trinity work in redemptive purposes through history? Do you see specific distinctions in the various covenantal relationships?
- v. What knowledge of the Trinity is necessary for salvation? For obedient discipleship?
 - 1. Eternity, divinity, personhood, unity – are these necessary at each step of spiritual growth?
 - 2. How much do you need to know to be saved? To be growing?
- vi. What are the deal breakers about the Trinity?
 - 1. Does Jesus have to be divine to offer substitutionary death?
YES!
 - 2. The thief on the cross evidently didn't have extensive theological understanding about who Jesus was, but by faith he believed and Jesus accepted that as being adequate to secure his eternal life.
- vii. Three general categories of faith:
 - 1. Simple faith – elementary belief.
 - 2. Orthodoxy – theologically correct.
 - 3. Maturity – a life balanced with right thinking, right living, right loving.