

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 245 Our Triune God Part 17

WAQY Wednesday 09/03/08

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.

And 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.

Now 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 head on or else it will grow to become a huge issue.

Now we have already seen that in 325 A.D., the Church convened a Council in the city of Nicaea to settle the issue that Arius, the presbyter from Alexandria had brought up. As you may remember, Arius was teaching that Jesus was a created being. Arius taught that Jesus was not Deity and that He was more than a man, but less than God. Arius' teaching had infiltrated the Church and had overrun it.

Alexander, the bishop of Alexandria was teaching that Jesus and God were different in Person and function, but were of the same substance. The Arian controversy reached a boiling point precisely because if Jesus was divine then he should be rightly worshipped; but if Jesus was a mere man or a created being- then we would be wrong to worship Him. So, the issue had to be resolved.

We already saw how that Alexander had excommunicated Arius for his heresy and that the Roman Emperor had been so dismayed at the division over Doctrine that threatened to split the Christian Church that he called the church together.

The Church met at Nicaea and hammered out a Document that affirmed the Deity of Jesus Christ. And we also saw that the Nicene Creed is nothing more than a summary of the Doctrine of the Deity of Jesus Christ and is useful today to use as one of many tools to combat the ongoing heresy of Arianism that is manifested in our day as the Jehovah's Witness organization.

Okay, the Church met; the Creed was written; Arius was thrown out of the Church and Christ's Divinity was affirmed. Problem solved, right? Wrong. Unknown to the Church at that time, the greatest damage that Arianism caused against the Church was yet ahead and the greatest battle culminating in the heroic stand of one man to rescue the Church of Jesus Christ from false teaching was yet to come.

Again let me remind all of us that heresy and false teachings are not defeated simply because the Church of Jesus Christ meets together and denounces the heresy. False doctrine is not eliminated simply because the Church hammers out a Doctrinal Statement or develops a

Creed. All of these things are good and are useful- but we need still more. Because you see, most heretics don't just slither off to live under some rock simply because they have been excommunicated from the Church. They leave the Church alright, but they continue to teach their lies and they continue to propagate their mischief and they continue to try to subvert the hearts and minds of God's people.

Heresy and false teaching and false doctrine are a real and a serious threat to the Church of Jesus Christ in general and believers in particular because heresy like the devil is always with us. It takes eternal vigilance on the part of the leaders of the Church to defeat heresy and it takes an ongoing commitment by the leadership of a church to maintain sound doctrine or it will be eroded over time and lost.

So the only way to defeat a lie from satan is not merely attack the lie- but the best way to defeat what Satan is doing is by teaching the Truth. And we cannot simply teach the Truth one time and then brush our hands off and go eat pizza and think that our job is done. No, Gospel Truth has to be taught and proclaimed over and over and over and over again in the eyes and ears of each succeeding generation of God's people. It has to be repeated over and over and over again in order to become important in our minds. And the leaders of the Church have to have the will and the determination and the love for the Truth to commit themselves to a lifetime of faithful teaching and earnest proclaiming. And at the same time, God's people have to love the Lord and the Word of God enough to want the Truth proclaimed and to not cave in to the temptation of trying to soften the message; or to distill the essence of Truth and water Sound Doctrine down to the point where it is more appealing to the carnal mind and the lukewarm member.

And without both the people and the priest fully surrendered to Christ and fully committed to the Truth of God's Word- it is only a matter of time before false teaching creeps back into the Church and takes over.

Remember, those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it. And the modern Church is ripe today for all sorts of heresy to make a huge comeback because we have fallen into the very same trap that the Church was in at the beginning of the Arian Controversy back in the fourth century. Tolerance is deemed today to be a greater virtue than being faithful to the Truth. And I don't just mean tolerance for

personal preferences or petty disagreements that are not essential. I mean serious, real and important areas of Doctrine that should be settled in our minds- yet are now up in the air- things like how sinners are justified before God; the Sovereignty of God; the understanding of the Trinity; and the Deity of Jesus Christ.

Pastors feel the pressure today to reduce or eliminate Bible Studies; cancel prayer meetings and have more meetings that are filled with light, happy, and entertaining things that do not convict the heart and have no power to transform the nature- like lots of music; weight loss seminars; pottery classes; and yoga sessions.

The modern Church has traded substance for symbolism; Doctrinal purity for doctrinal leniency; and we would rather be rich and prosperous and fat and dumb and happy and get lots and lots of stuff than we would be right with God and faithful to His call and obedient to His Word.

With all of this going on- with the Church of Jesus this unprepared for apostasy, is it any wonder that every single one of the seven major heresy groups that we are studying is alive and well and is living in a Church near you? The answer of course is that we must repent and we must return to our first love and we must return to the Bible and we must return to the fear of God and we must return to respecting and appreciating and valuing Sound Biblical inspired; God breathed Truth that came from the very Heart and Mind and Mouth of Almighty God.

Now soon after the Council of Nicaea was over and everyone returned home, Alexander, the godly bishop who defended the Deity of Christ against the Arian heresy, died and a man named Athanasius rose up to take his place. Now it was Athanasius who had worked behind the scenes to give Alexander the Scriptural proof that he needed to defeat Arius at Nicaea.

And Athanasius was no sooner in his office than he went under immediate and vicious attacks by the Arians. Lies were spread about his moral character and he was deposed and exiled several times- all because he was the chief defender of the Deity of Jesus Christ. Meanwhile Arianism continued to grow at an astonishing rate- after the Council had formally rejected it.

The Roman Emperor, Constantine, became so frustrated that the Council of Nicaea had not ended the controversy that he became

friendly with the Arians and he also blamed Athanasius for all the trouble because Athanasius refused to budge off of the Doctrine of the Deity of Christ and he refused to receive Arius back into the fellowship of the Church. And things got so bad that in 336 A.D. Constantine himself banished Athanasius from the Church because he would not compromise about Jesus' Divinity and Constantine said the he personally would restore Arius back into the Church as a bishop again.

Now we must remember that Athanasius' faithfulness to what the Scriptures taught about Jesus was not viewed by the fourth century Church as being a good thing. No, Athanasius's refusal to accept a lie about Christ was actually viewed as being a *hindrance* to Christian unity and the Church increasingly despised Athanasius for this. Now think about this. Just eleven years after the Church of Jesus Christ had formally rejected Arianism as being a heresy and had formally excommunicated Arius and 300 bishops for teaching blasphemy about Christ's Divinity- Arius, the heretic, was now looked at by the majority in the Church as being a good and noble man who was unfairly persecuted because he simply held a different opinion about the Deity of Christ, which was not seen as a big deal anyway. And Athanasius- the faithful defender of the Faith- was looked at as being the troublemaker.

So by sheer arrogance and persistence, the evil heretic Arius was about to win by *political* means what he could never win on Biblical grounds.

And Eusebius, the historian wrote that the Bishop of Constantinople, a godly man, was so distraught that the heretic, Arius was about to be reinstated, that he prayed and Eusebius recorded his prayer. The bishop prayed,

“Lord, if Arius is to be reinstated as a bishop tomorrow, then please take me first out of this world. But if thou wilt have pity, take Arius away so that this heresy and impiety may not enter in”

And Eusebius also wrote that, that very day, Arius dropped dead by a sudden attack of cholera and was never reinstated into the Church. Now in spite of the death of its leader, Arianism continued to spread and Jerome, the great Biblical Scholar who lived at that time wrote what I think is one of the greatest lines in all of Church history. Jerome wrote,

“... the whole world awoke with a groan to find itself Arian”.

Now in just two more short years after the death of Arius- the heresy of Arianism completely took over the Christian Church and every single bishop in the Church besides Athanasius had either completely converted to Arianism, or was greatly sympathetic to it. It was at *this* time that the saying was made- “*Athanasius against the world*”. And Athanasius the sole defender of the Christian Faith was literally standing alone against every leader in the Church in defense of the Deity of Jesus Christ.

I tell you that this is one of the greatest moments in all of Church history. God had truly raised up a warrior who would not be broken and who could not be bought and over the next several years through many tears and trials and unfair treatment at the hands of his own brethren- God used Athanasius to rescue the Church from the false teaching of Arianism.

I tell you that we need to love the Truth like Athanasius. We need to love the Church as much as this man loved the Church and we need to be willing to defend the Bible against the heretics of our day and we need to be willing to stand against the tide of popular opinion in order to bring the Church back into right standing with God and we can do this if we are willing to earnestly contend for the Faith that was once and for all delivered to the saints.

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.