

Chapter 1

Objective, Design and History

The Journey of Life:

Have you ever considered yourself a traveler in time? In reality, that is what we are. As preceding generations have gone before, it is our turn to take the journey of life on this planet called earth. Everyday those who have completed their journey disembark, while new travelers climb aboard for their trip. At this time, several billion people are taking the trip together. As these individuals make their pilgrimage down life's pathway—are they truly mindful of the purpose for their journey? Is it only by chance they are here? Could it be only a coincidence they happen to be here at this time in history? The time allotted to fulfill their journey is uncertain. When or where the journey will conclude is unknown. All the same, one thing is certain; there will be an end to the journey.

Traveling through life takes on many unusual distinctions. For some individuals, life is like being on a treadmill. They walk and walk without getting anywhere. Others turn up the speed so fast that their life is half over before they know where they have been. The pleasures and attractions of life can grab for our attention. The troubles and cares of this world frequently capture our concerns. Life is full of distractions, and for that reason we should get our focus on the important things that matter. There is no better subject than the Trinity to bring into perspective the important things of life.

While the Trinity relates to the doctrine of the Godhead, its real issue deals with life. Considering we are on an expedition called life, no other subject matter entails the importance for our existence as does the Trinity. Stated another way—when we think of our journey on earth as a testing time, there is only one way to pass the test and that is by way of the principles contained in the Trinity.

The Concept of the Trinity:

A comprehension of the Trinity is hard for many individuals to grasp. The usual perception of the Trinity is one of confusion and mystic. Often it is presented in such a complex way that the result only brings added confusion. Despite that, the Bible relates that God is not the author of confusion.

Let's take a brief look at the Trinity at this time. To begin with, a requirement for someone to redeem man from death came about due to man's disobedience to God's decree (sin).

The biblical account of Adam and Eve in the "Garden of Eden" details the disobedience. Disobedience to God resulted in death for man and his offspring. Death meant that all humanity must suffer the consequences for sin or else he needed someone to save him from that death.

The need for a savior paved the way for the incarnate God (Jesus) to become that Savior, which in turn resulted in the Savior becoming the heart of the Trinity. The Savior conquered death, hell, and the grave and established a way for man to experience unconditional new life once again. However, even though this new life is unconditional—that is, it has no strings attached—it is provisional, meaning it is available only through the Savior. We shall go in more detail about this in later chapters.

The Trinity is stated as fact in Scripture and therefore was never presented as a topic. The Bible simply assumes it, and since it is not stated, some take that to mean the Trinity is non-existent. Meanwhile, a different set of issue results among

many who accept the Trinity as fact. While much evidence is put forth in Scripture to support its accuracy, many believers fail to see the relation regarding the three individual entities of the one God. Complexity may play a role, but comprehension of the Trinity generally hinges on how the Trinity is presented.

Reaching Our Destination:

Before we venture too far, a few details about our destination and how we intend to get there will prove beneficial. We have structured this study to provide a full illustration of the Trinity without the mystery. Our first task involves putting together a variety of details as a foundation. Some of these details may seem familiar, while others unfamiliar. This information will provide us with enough of the particulars to put the final touches on the overall picture. Scripture is the staple of our study and many shall be presented in our research.

This first chapter of our study will begin with an inquiry regarding the meaning and definition of the Trinity. Then an investigation into the Trinity's historic background will reveal its origin. A brief look at why religions reject the Trinity and a look forward will round out this chapter. These and a few other particulars shall provide us with information to build upon as we continue into later chapters.

You will find throughout this book that most words attributed to the Godhead are capitalized. This is to establish a contrast between the fundamental nature of mortal man and the deified nature ascribed to God.

Seeing the Completed Picture:

Note that each chapter of this book contains helpful information and it is this information that will assist us in formulating a clear and concise picture of the Trinity. As a result, a thorough covering of the material is necessary. Luke's gospel records a prayer of Jesus. This prayer shows us that the

only way we can learn the truths of God is when He reveals them to us:

- In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight. - (Luke 10:21)
- All things are delivered to Me of My Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and *he* to whom the Son will reveal *Him*. - (Luke 10:22)

Defining the Trinity:

The Trinity is a distinctive doctrine which declares that one God exists in three Persons. The Bible presents the three manifestations of God as; the Father, the Son (Jesus Christ) and the Holy Ghost (sometimes referred to as the Holy Spirit). They do not represent three different people as some have taught, but express how God reveals Himself in three different ways. Both Old and New Testaments testify that God is one.

When the Bible mentions God, it generally refers to God as *the Father*. Nevertheless, references regarding *Jesus* and *the Holy Spirit* as God also appear. Strikingly, the word Trinity is not found in the Bible and its *meaning* is established in only one particular place which reads as follows:

- Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: - (Matthew 28:19)

Within the boundaries of this Scripture verse, Jesus also bestowed the command of *the Great Commission* upon His disciples. This specific passage provides us with a view of the Godhead, along with the relationship one to another.

Additional Trinity Scriptures:

While the Trinity is defined in only one verse, we find other passages in both the Old and New Testaments which expound

on the three manifestations of one God. The Old Testament book of Isaiah contains one such verse. This passage makes it evident that God is talking as the second Person of the Godhead:

- Come ye near unto Me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there *am* I: and now the Lord God, and His Spirit, hath sent Me. - (Isaiah 48:16)

In this Old Testament verse, God is speaking as the second Person (God the Son). We can break it down as follows: “Come ye near Me (God the Son), hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there *am* I (God the Son): and now the Lord God (the Father), and His Spirit (God the Holy Spirit), hath sent Me (God the Son).”

This next passage is taken from the gospel of Luke. Here we find John the Baptist baptizing Jesus, while providing us with the following illustration:

- Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened - (Luke 3:21)
- And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art My beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased. - (Luke 3: 22)

Notice the Trinity in this particular verse. John is baptizing Jesus, while the voice of the Father is in heaven, and the Holy Ghost descends upon Jesus like a dove.

Finally let's look at one more example demonstrating the Trinity within the same passage of Scripture. The Last Supper has just ended, and Jesus makes this statement to His disciples:

- But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, *even* the Spirit of truth, which

proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me: -
(John 15:26)

In this Scripture, the word Comforter is another name used for the Holy Spirit. Here we see Jesus talking about sending the Holy Spirit from the Father. Again we find the entire Godhead revealed in the same verse. Several other Scripture passages illustrating the Godhead exist throughout the Bible, but these should be adequate for our purposes at this point.

Explaining the Trinity:

Defining the Trinity seems to be an easier task than explaining it. Generally, the necessity of explaining it has resulted in a loss of words for many. Numerous well-intended definitions and analogies have been attempted to explain the Trinity. Most of them however, only remain as an unsuccessful effort without giving a genuine or realistic explanation.

The main view commonly used for explanation, is the one handed down from the Nicene Council in the fourth century A.D. Even that view does not fully disclose the composition of the Godhead, because the Trinity is still accepted as a mystery.

Religions Reject the Trinity:

All world religions, except one, completely reject the concept of the Trinity. Primarily this rejection centers mainly on the refusal to acknowledge the deity of Jesus Christ. Christianity is the one religion to incorporate the Trinity into its belief system. Christians embrace the Trinity to the extent it is the most important tenet of their Faith. The reasoning maintains that if Jesus were not God, Christianity would merely be like some of the other religions, which seek after a man as their founder.

Judaism is the only other world religion that shares the same God as Christianity. While they believe in God the Father, they too reject the deity of Jesus Christ. They accept the nature of the Holy Spirit, but not with the same quality as expressed

by Christendom. Judaism's conflict with the Trinity stems from the Scripture in Deuteronomy 6:4, which states: Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD.

Islam is the only other major world religion which professes a belief in one God. The god of Islam is called Allah and despite some similarities among the religions, Allah is definitely not the same God as revered by Jews and Christians.

The Documents Unchanged:

During the fourth century, the Church leaders constructed and introduced the doctrine of the Trinity. Debated and scrutinized over the years, these documents remain practically the same to this day. An element overlooked in the doctrine kept the Trinity from its full disclosure. Hence, in the eyes of the Church, full comprehension of the Trinity shall remain forever veiled.

There have been many well-meaning manuscripts written about the Trinity; yet, we know little more than we did centuries ago. Accordingly, the information contained in this book is valuable for the Church to consider. By mutually assessing and receiving this new revelation, the Church can heal many of the divisive wounds aggravated since early Church history.

The Need for Understanding:

The absence of understanding regarding the topic of the Trinity has definitely kept many away from the Christian religion. The question arises: If confusion exists among leaders of Christianity regarding their major doctrine, why would I want to join them. Consequently, many searching for something to satisfy the spiritual hunger in their lives have looked elsewhere.

Early Church History:

Much of early Church history is associated with the Trinity, and yet there was no mention of the word Trinity in the transcripts of the New Testament writers. In fact, the word

Trinity was only first introduced to the Church in the second century, and disagreements followed its teachings almost immediately.

The differences of opinion sparked many arguments regarding this article of faith. When it finally managed to establish itself as a major doctrine, another conflict developed in the fourth century. This came about through a teaching by a man named *Arius* (256-336 A.D.), intending to cast doubt upon the divinity of Jesus Christ.

Many embraced *Arius's* teaching, which became known as *Arianism*. His view taught that since Jesus was begotten and created He could not have been God, for God was neither begotten, nor had a beginning.

To combat this heresy, and set up doctrinal guidelines to be followed, the Church called for a gathering of bishops. This occurred in 325 A.D. and became known as *the first council of Nicaea*. This is the same council that produced the “Nicene Creed.” The council reinforced the Church’s stand proclaiming Jesus as both God and Man.

Even after *the Nicene council* asserted its position, acknowledging the full deity of Christ, *Arianism* continued to attract followers for several years, and a trace of the teaching remains even to this day.

Other Councils and Committees:

A second council at Constantinople was held in 381 A.D. to help strengthen the position instituted at Nicene. It also established the fullness of the Holy Spirit and His position in the Godhead. Other councils formed later to reinforce the views created at Nicaea and Constantinople. Essentially, each council upheld the deity of Jesus and affirmed the divinity of the Holy Spirit as the same nature as the Father and the Son.

The documents produced in these council meetings have shaped the beliefs shared by most Christian churches today.

Overall, these beliefs, acknowledge that the Father is God Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. Jesus is His only begotten Son, begotten not made one with the Father. The Holy Ghost is the Lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. This teaching of the Trinity is essentially the same one most Churches depend on today in describing the Trinity.

Differences of Understanding:

Since the apostolic days of a united Church, divisions have occurred within Christianity. Those divisions generally came about due to disagreements regarding the interpretation of the Scriptures or in disobedience to the governing authorities. Throughout the years, divisions have resulted in several denominations being formed as a result of those differences. In spite of the differences however, most of the denominations agree on the more important areas of doctrine, including those of the Trinity.

Interestingly, a few denominations proclaim themselves as Christian, but have denounced the Trinity altogether. Their views normally line up with those of non-Christian religions. Because they include Jesus within their religious structure, they operate under the umbrella of Christianity. But, since they teach contrary to what mainline Churches teach on the topic of the Trinity, they are considered as outside of the mainstream.

Non-Christian Inquiry:

Even some non-Christian religions have attempted to analyze the Trinity to see if it would fit in with any of their beliefs. In particular, because Jesus Christ is God and Man, not one religion could justify His deity. A paradox would form if another religion ever professed a belief in Christ as both God and Man. That religion's identity could no longer classify under a *non-Christian* name, but would classify under Christianity.

