

# **The Basic Truths of Our Common Faith**

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Scripture quotations are taken from the *New King James Version* of the Bible, unless otherwise noted. Words in brackets are the literal translation of Hebrew and Greek.

Throughout the Scripture quotations, words are italicized for added emphasis.

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*“To Titus, my true son in our common faith:  
Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Fa-  
ther and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior.”*

— Titus 1:4

*“Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to  
write unto you of our common salvation, I  
was constrained to write unto you exhorting  
you to contend earnestly for the faith which  
was once for all delivered unto the saints.”*

— Jude 3 (ASV)

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## 1 ► Our Common Faith

### *The Word “Common”*

The “common faith” mentioned in the Bible refers to that which is common to all Christians. The Greek word for common is *koinos* (κοινος) and means “something common to all,” in contrast to what is particular and limited to a few. This same word was used to describe the original language of the New Testament — *koine* or “common” Greek. *Koine* Greek was the language common to all. Similarly, in Titus 1:4 when the apostle Paul applied the word “common” to faith, he identified the realm that was common to all Christians. Thus, the realm of faith is the realm of the things that are common to us all, such as our common salvation and our common fellowship. It is this “common faith” that we need to know and pursue with each other.

### *The Meaning of Faith*

To know and pursue this common faith, we must understand how it is spoken of in the New Testament.

### *The Basic Truths of Our Common Faith*

What is this common faith spoken of in the New Testament? What is the precise significance of this “faith,” that it can link believers together on a common ground. To answer these questions, the first thing we must see is that all genuine believers do in fact have one thing in common, that is, faith. Paul speaks of this in Titus 1:4: “To Titus, my true son in our common faith: grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Saviour.” In other words, Paul’s relationship with Titus in the family of God is based upon the realm of the “common faith.” Jude also speaks of a realm where we find a common ground, and that is “our common salvation.” In Jude 3 he says, “Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints” (ASV). Thus, both faith and salvation are revealed as the realm where believers find common ground for fellowship.

The second thing we need to see is that faith has two sides to it: an objective side and a subjective side. The objective side is related to the basic truths revealed in the Bible. The subjective side is related to our response to those basic truths. The principle that we find in Romans 1:17 helps us to understand these two sides: “For in it [the

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gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed [*out of* / εἰκ] faith [*into* / εἰς] faith; as it is written, “The just shall live by faith.” The phrase “out of faith” refers to the basic truths of the gospel that both define faith and generate faith. But the phrase “into faith” refers to the subjective faith-response to the basic truths of the gospel as they are spoken.

Faith, on the subjective side, is the inner response to the speaking of the basic truths of God and Christ. That is why in Galatians 3:2 and 5, Paul describes faith as “the hearing of faith.” In other words, for faith to be imparted into us as a subjective response, there needs to be a hearing of the basic truths of the divine revelation concerning God and Christ. The subjective side of faith as “response” requires the revelation of the objective side of “truth.”

To understand “faith” in the New Testament, it is important to apprehend the meaning of the two sides of faith. Some passages emphasize the objective side of faith, while others emphasize the subjective side. For example, when Jude speaks of “the faith” delivered to the saints, he is speaking more of the objective side of faith, that is, the things which all Christians believe in — the basic truths. Whereas, when Peter in 2 Peter 1:1 speaks of all believers having “a like precious faith with us,” he is speaking more of a subjective, believing response.

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Paul, on the other hand, combines these two sides of faith in one verse in Galatians 2:16: “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but [*through the faith of Jesus Christ*] (subjective), even *we have believed [into] Christ Jesus* (objective), that we might be justified by [*the faith of*] *Christ* (subjective) and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.” Thus, *believing into Jesus Christ* speaks of the object of faith — Jesus Christ. Whereas being justified by *the faith of Christ* refers to the subjective faith with which we believe.

It is important to realize that subjective faith in the heart does not exist apart from its proper object. The faith that is spoken of in the New Testament is not merely a general principle of trust and believing, but it is a response in us that is riveted to its exclusive object — Christ Himself. In other words, faith is nonexistent apart from Christ. In Galatians 3:23-25 Paul says, <sup>23</sup> “But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. <sup>24</sup> Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. <sup>25</sup> But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.” In verse 23 Paul mentions that “faith came,” and then again in verse 25 he says, “after faith has come.” These two verses speak of faith in a

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personified way. It is as though faith were a person that just arrived on the scene. Thus, the coming of faith refers to the coming of Christ. In other words Christ and faith are two inseparable things. When Christ, the only proper object of faith, comes, then it can be said that faith as a subjective response comes.

To relate to one another on the level of the common faith has to do with the objective, basic truths of the gospel that we believe in, and also to our common response to those truths. Thus, enjoying the common faith between us comes simply by recognizing that we all have the same kind of response in us to a common object — *faith in Jesus Christ!*

### *Fellowship in the Realm of Our Common Faith*

Another factor to help identify the reality of the common faith between us is to see that the Greek word for “fellowship” in the New Testament is derived from the word “common.” Κοινος – *koinos* (common) is the root word for κοινωνια – *koinonia* (fellowship). This relationship between fellowship and what is “common” is certainly true in our experience. In our relationship with one another, whenever we remain in the realm of our common faith, we discover that there is always genuine fellowship between us. This kind of fellowship comes

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from our common participation in Christ, the one unique object of our faith.

The apostle John describes this fellowship in 1 John 1:3: “That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.” In other words, fellowship with one another *is* fellowship with the Father and with the Son. Or, to have something in common with one another *is* to have something in common with the Father and the Son. Our common faith ushers in fellowship.

### *Faith as Our CommonGround*

When the writers of the New Testament seek to bring believers together on common ground, they always emphasize the realm of faith. For example, the apostle Peter in writing to saints who were scattered in the Gentile world, begins his second epistle by saying, “Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained a like precious faith with us in the righteousness of our God and the Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 1:1, ASV). Peter’s opening word is an appeal to the common faith existing between them — “*like precious faith with us.*” This kind of word immediately infused them with a

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common feeling. The apostle Paul does the same thing when he writes to the saints in Rome, a locality that he had never visited. In Romans 1:12 he says, “That I with you may be comforted in you, each of us by the other’s faith, both yours and mine” (ASV). It is the mutual faith that Paul calls upon as the common bond existing between them. In Titus 1:1, when Paul describes the nature of his apostleship, he says, “Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God’s [chosen ones] . . .” In other words, Paul’s work among the saints was linked to the realm of faith. Wherever faith was present in the saints, that was an indication that he was in contact with God’s chosen ones. Faith was the spontaneous connection that joined the saints everywhere on a common ground.

### *Our Common Response to Christ*

The most precious common factor between us as believers is the common faith we possess expressed in our responses to Christ. The apostle Paul even makes this common factor the goal of Christian growth in Ephesians 4:13: “[Until] we all [arrive at] the [oneness] of the faith and [of] the [full] knowledge of the Son of God, [at] a perfect man, [at] the measure of the stature of the fullness

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of Christ.” To grow up into Christ in all things will be expressed in our ability to fellowship our faith with one another. That is, we are able to fellowship the common responses of faith we have to our one common Lord. This is to arrive at the oneness of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God.

On the negative side, Satan, God’s enemy, seeks to creep into the church to damage faith by undermining and even denying the Person of Christ — the only object of our faith (Jude 4). This is why Jude exhorts the saints to earnestly contend for the faith “once for all delivered to the saints.” At that time there were subtle attacks on matters having to do with the faith of the believers. The way Satan sought to attack the faith of the saints was by attempting to damage the very truths that created that faith. The solid basic truths concerning the Triune God, the Person of Christ, and the Bible were attacked by the enemy. When these basic truths, which have been once and for all delivered to the saints, are destroyed, the faith of the saints is damaged.

### *Preserving the Common Faith between Us by the Basic Truths*

The common faith exists between us because the object of faith exists. The object of faith is that in which

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we believe. If the basic truths of the faith are destroyed, then faith itself — the living response in the hearts of the saints toward God and Christ — is destroyed. When Jude speaks of “the faith . . . once for all delivered to the saints,” he is referring to those precious truths revealed in the Bible concerning God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. When these truths are spoken, they generate and create faith in the heart. Romans 10:17 says, “So then faith comes [out of] hearing, and hearing [through] the word of [Christ].” Thus, only one kind of hearing can produce faith — the hearing that focuses upon the basic truths related to the Father and the Son as they are revealed in the written Word.

Therefore, it is the burden of this book to consider from the Word of God the basic truths related to our common faith as believers. All genuine Christians have a faith that is related to three crucial matters: the Triune God, the Person of Christ, and the Bible. May the Lord Himself strengthen the reality of these things among us as His children.

## 2 ■ The Triune God

In the Scriptures God has revealed Himself as the Triune God. The term “triune” is composed of two Latin words: *tri*, meaning three; and *une* from *unus*, meaning one. Thus, God is the “Three-One” or Triune God. He is three and one at the same time. Although the terms “triune” and “trinity” do not occur in the Bible, they accurately represent the facts revealed in the Bible concerning God. Both facts about God are equally true: He is uniquely one and yet at the same time distinctly three — the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

### *God Is Uniquely One*

The controlling revelation of God in both the Old and New Testaments is that He is uniquely one. A number of Old Testament verses reveal this fact. For example, Deuteronomy 6:4 declares, “Hear, O Israel: *The LORD our God, the LORD is one!*” Also, Isaiah 44:6 says, “Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: I am the First and I am the Last; *Besides*

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*Me there is no God.”* In Isaiah 44:8b, the Lord asks a question and then answers it Himself: “Is there a God besides Me? Indeed *there is no other Rock; I know not one.*”

The New Testament also reveals that God is uniquely one. For example, in John 17:3 the Lord Jesus prayed, “And this is eternal life, that they may know You, *the only true God*, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.” Also, several verses in the Epistles reveal that God is one. The following are a few examples: 1 Corinthians 8:4, “We know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that *there is no other God but one*”; 1 Corinthians 8:6, “*Yet for us there is only one God*, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live”; 1 Timothy 2:5, “For *there is one God* and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus”; and 1 Timothy 1:17, “Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, [*the only God*], be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.”

The fact that God is uniquely one negates three heresies about God that have tried to creep into the church through the centuries. The first heresy is known as *tritheism*, which teaches that there are three separate Gods, rather than God being uniquely one. The second

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heresy is identified as *arianism*, or subordinationism, which teaches that Jesus is an inferior substance separate from the Father, making Him a second God. The third heresy is known as *macedonianism*, which teaches that the Holy Spirit is excluded from the one essence of God. All three heresies attempt in some way to divide the one unique essence of God.

According to the Scriptures, God being one is related to His one essence. The Lord Jesus defines this one essence in John 4:24 when He says, “God is Spirit.” In other words, God’s essence is Spirit. This Spirit-essence is the nature of God’s person and is indivisible. Although there are three in the Godhead, there are not three different essences of God. The Lord Jesus made this clear when He said in John 10:30, “I and the Father are *one*” (ASV). The word *one* (εἷς) in Greek is in the neuter gender, indicating “one essence” or “one thing.” Thus, He discloses that His relationship with the Father is uniquely one in the one essence of God. Also included in this one essence of God is the Holy Spirit. In 1 Corinthians 2:11 the apostle Paul says, “For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.” “The things” (τὰς) of God are related to all that pertains to the essence of God; and no one knows those

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things except the Spirit of God. This indicates that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are indivisibly one in Their divine essence.

### *God Is Distinctly Three*

The Bible reveals not only that God is uniquely one but also that God is distinctly three — the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The revelation of the Trinity is found in both the Old and New Testaments. For example, in Genesis 1:1 we read, “In the beginning God (*Elohim*) created the heavens and the earth.” The Hebrew name for God, *Elohim*, is singular in meaning yet plural in its grammatical form, indicating plurality in God. The New Testament makes it clear that this singular name composed of a plurality is the Trinity (Matt. 28:19). Also, in Genesis 1:26 God (*Elohim*) speaks of Himself in the plural as “Us” and “Our,” while in the same verse the terms “image” and “likeness” describe His expression as being singular: “And God said, Let *Us* make man in *Our* image, after *Our* likeness.” Isaiah 6:8 also uses both the plural and singular in relation to God. On the one hand, God speaks of Himself as “I”; on the other hand, He refers to Himself as “Us”: “Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: Whom shall *I* send, and who will go for *Us*?”

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These verses are representative of the Old Testament's revelation that God is distinctly three.

As we mentioned, the New Testament also clearly teaches that God is distinctly three. Matthew 28:19 says, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them [into] the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." The use of the singular number for "name" in this verse shows us that God is uniquely one. Yet, at the same time, the singular "name" includes the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, showing that God is distinctly three. Thus, the one name equals the Three in the Godhead and reveals that God is triune.

Another key verse in the New Testament that shows that God is distinctly three is 2 Corinthians 13:14: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the [fellowship] of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen." Here, God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are spoken of as three, and are also linked with the three distinct qualities of love, grace, and fellowship. Surely this emphasizes the fact that God is distinctly three.

Although God is "distinctly" three, this does not imply that God is "separately" three. There is a big difference! God being distinctly three means that although God is Father, Son, and Spirit, He still remains

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*numerically* one God. If God were “separately” three, the Father, Son, and Spirit would be three separate Gods. This is tritheism, a heresy that Bible-believing Christians do not believe in. Thus, the Father, Son, and Spirit are distinct but not separate.

A word of caution is needed at this point concerning the use of the term “person” as it applies to each member of the Trinity. The Scriptures ascribe complete personality to the Father (John 17:5-6, 24-25), complete personality to the Son (John 5:25-27), and complete personality to the Holy Spirit (John 16:7, 13-15); yet if we conclude from this that the three persons in the Trinity are three *separate* persons in the same sense that we think of three separate human beings, we unwittingly fall into the heresy of tritheism. Concerning the use of the term “person,” Dr. W. H. Griffith Thomas has said, “It certainly must not be pressed too far, or it will lead to tritheism. While we use the term to denote distinctions in the Godhead, we do not imply distinctions which amount to separateness, but distinctions which are associated with the essential mutual co-inherence or inclusiveness. We intend by the term ‘person’ to express those real distinctions of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit which are found amid the oneness of the Godhead, distinctions which are no mere temporary manifestations of Deity, but

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essential and permanent elements within the Divine unity” (W. H. Griffith Thomas, *The Principles of Theology*, London: Church Book Room Press LTD., 1945, p. 31).

That God is uniquely one and distinctly three is the revelation of God in the Bible. Our human mentality cannot fully comprehend how this could be, but that does not change the fact that God is both three and one at the same time. We can only exclaim with Paul, “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! *For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor?*” (Rom. 11:33-34).

### *All Three Are Eternally God*

Two other important points concerning the revelation of the Triune God in the Bible are that all Three are God and all Three are eternal. The Father is God according to 1 Peter 1:2a: “According to the foreknowledge of *God the Father*.” The Son is God according to Hebrews 1:8: “But to *the Son* He says, Your throne, *O God*, is forever and ever.” The Holy Spirit is God according to Acts 5:3-4: “Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to *the Holy Spirit* . . . You have not lied to men, but to *God*.” These verses show that all Three in the Trinity are equally identified as God.

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Each is God, and also all Three are eternal. The Father is called “the eternal Father” in Isaiah 9:6. The Son reveals that He is eternal in His prayer to the Father in John 17:5: “And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.” The Holy Spirit is called “the eternal Spirit” in Hebrews 9:14. These verses confirm the fact that all Three in the Trinity coexist eternally.

The fact that all Three eternally coexist rules out the heresy of modalism taught by Sabellius in the third century. According to Sabellius, the Three in the Godhead — the Father, the Son, and the Spirit — were simply *modes* or *phases* of God’s existence. Thus, his heresy is called modalism. Sabellius did not believe that all Three coexist eternally. Rather, he taught a successive trinity that made the Father, Son, and Spirit mere names for three different acts or roles that God played on the stage of time. He alleged that first, in the Old Testament period, God came out as the Father; then in the Gospels God simply changed His mode, coming out as the Son; and after thirty-three and a half years of being the Son, God changed roles again on the day of Pentecost and came out as the Spirit. Such a heresy makes the Father, the Son, and the Spirit temporary phases and successive modes of one God. This nullifies the biblical revelation of all Three in

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the Godhead simultaneously coexisting from eternity to eternity.

#### *The Relationships in the Trinity*

The Bible reveals not only that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit eternally and simultaneously coexist, but it also reveals *how* they coexist. In other words, we can discover from Scripture the details of *how* the Three in the Godhead are related to one another. Thus, after seeing that God is both uniquely one and distinctly three, and that the Father, Son, and Spirit simultaneously coexist from eternity to eternity, we also need to see the precise relationship each has with the others.

The primary factor which governs the relationships in the Trinity is the indivisible nature of the essence of God. This is seen in two scriptural facts: “God is Spirit” (John 4:24) and “God is one” (Gal. 3:20). The fact that “God is Spirit” describes His essence, and the fact that “God is one” defines the indivisible nature of that essence. Thus, the various relationships revealed in the Bible between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all strictly *within* the one essence of God.

The next important factor to see regarding the relationships in the Trinity is that the indivisible essence of God consists of a mutual “interpenetration” or “indwell-

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ing” of each in the Trinity with the others. It is a mutual indwelling of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They live and exist in each other. This interpenetration in the Trinity is also known in the history of biblical interpretation as “coinherence.” Like the word “trinity,” interpenetration and coinherence are not, strictly speaking, biblical words; nevertheless they accurately convey the facts revealed in Scripture.

The mutual interpenetration between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit within the one essence of our one God is seen in the Lord’s conversation with the disciples in John 14:7-11. After Philip told the Lord, “Show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us,” the Lord responded by saying, “*He who has seen Me has seen the Father*; so how can you say, Show us the Father?” Such a statement identifying one in the Godhead as the other is then explained by the Lord. In other words, after He identifies Himself with the Father in John 14:9, the Lord describes the relationship of mutual interpenetration between Him and the Father in John 14:10: “Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but *the Father who dwells in Me* does the works.” This verse explains *why* the Lord could say, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father.” It is because of the relationship of

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mutual indwelling between the Father and the Son in the divine essence. The Son is *in* the Father and the Father is *in* the Son.

Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown's commentary speaks of the relationship in John 14:10 as a "*Mutual Inbeing* of the Father and the Son." In the fifth century Augustine summarized this truth in his classic work entitled *On the Trinity*, 6.10.12: "in that highest Trinity one is as much as the three together, nor are two anything more than one. And they are infinite in themselves. So both each are in each, and all in each, and each in all, and all in all, and all are one."

Thus, each in the Godhead interpenetrates and coinheres the others; that is, each is inseparably existing in the others. This is why we have verses such as Isaiah 9:6, in which the Son is called the Eternal Father, and 2 Corinthians 3:17, in which the Lord is identified with the Spirit. This coinherence within the one essence of God is expressed in Scripture by the kind of utterances that identify one as the other.

By seeing the truth of Scripture regarding the indivisible nature of God's one essence in His Trinity, we are preserved from the heresy of tritheism. Also, by seeing the coinherence of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in their relationship with each other, we preserve the

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simultaneous distinctions in the Godhead and keep ourselves from the heresy of modalism. In order to be safeguarded from heresy it is important to see from the Scriptures how the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit coexist in their relationships with each other.

### *The Triune God in His Economy*

The Triune God is uniquely one and distinctly three while simultaneously and eternally coexisting and coinhering in Their relationships with each other within the one divine essence. These are facts of Scripture that are primarily related to the aspect of God's inner being and existence. This aspect of the Trinity is sometimes called the "essential" or "intrinsic" Trinity. However, the aspect of the Trinity that the Scriptures predominantly unfold is known as the "economical" or "functional" Trinity. This aspect is related to the outward, historical process that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit passed through in order to accomplish God's eternal purpose with man.

It is through the successive steps taken by the Triune God that we see the practical purpose of His being triune. As the Father, Son, and Spirit are progressively revealed from Genesis to Revelation, we discover that the Triune

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God is working out His economy and plan in relationship to man. It is as God works out His plan of imparting Himself into man through creation, incarnation, redemption, indwelling, sanctification, and glorification that He is unveiled as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. For example, Genesis 1:26-27 reveals the Triune God in the context of His creating man in His own image and likeness. John's Gospel reveals the Triune God in incarnation and redemption (John 1:1-2, 14; 7:37-39; 14—17; 19:30; 20:22). Matthew 28:19 reveals the Triune God in man's experience — the nations are to be baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Romans 8:9-11 and Galatians 4:6 reveal the Triune God in relation to His indwelling of man. Second Corinthians 13:14 reveals the Triune God in the realm of fellowship and enjoyment. First Peter 1:2 reveals the Triune God in the context of His work of sanctification. Revelation 21:22-23 and 22:1-5 reveal the Triune God in His ultimate glorification in the New Jerusalem.

Therefore, a proper scriptural understanding of the Triune God must reveal not only His inner being but also His outward, historical process, which is related to His economy or plan of dispensing Himself into man. This historical process is not to be confused with the successive modalism taught by the heretic Sabellius, who de-

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nied the simultaneous coexistence of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Rather, this process should be understood as the successive steps which the Triune God took in order to accomplish His eternal purpose with man.

### *The Triune God in Man's Experience*

In the Bible the revelation of the Triune God is given in the context of man's experience. This is a basic principle. Thus, it is in the realm of our experience of God that we discover the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit operating as one. This one operation is seen in several passages where the Father, the Spirit of the Father, the Lord, Christ, and the Holy Spirit are used quite interchangeably in reference to the believer's experience. For example, John 14:17-18 reveals how the Lord and the Spirit are used interchangeably in Their coming to the disciples: <sup>17</sup> "Even *the Spirit* of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees *Him* nor knows *Him*; but you know *Him*, for *He* dwells with you and will be in you. <sup>18</sup> *I* will not leave you orphans; *I* will come to you." When the Spirit comes to the disciples, the Lord Himself is coming to them. The "Him" and the "He" (the Spirit) in verse 17 becomes the "I" (Christ) in verse 18. The coming of the Spirit is the coming of Christ. In the

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disciples' experience there is no separation between the Lord and the Spirit. They are interchangeably identified. The coming of one is the coming of the other.

The fact that all Three in the Godhead operate as one in man's experience can also be seen by comparing Matthew 10:20, Mark 13:11, and Luke 21:15. For example, concerning those brought before the councils and synagogues Matthew 10:20 says, "For it is not you who speak, but *the Spirit of your Father* who speaks in you." Then Mark 13:11 says, "For it is not you who speak, but *the Holy Spirit*." And again Luke 21:15 says, "For *I [Christ]* will give you a mouth and wisdom." Thus, the Spirit of the Father, the Holy Spirit, and Christ Himself are used interchangeably in relation to the same experience of the believer. The operation of one is interchangeably ascribed to another because the Father, the Son, and the Spirit function as one in man's experience.

This means that in our experience the Holy Spirit is not merely a "representative" of Christ. The Holy Spirit experientially is Christ Himself living in us. Because of the mutual indwelling of the Father, Son, and Spirit in each other and because of Their one operation in the realm of man's experience, the Scriptures identify one as the other, or interchangeably use the names of each in reference to the same experience. Thus, Paul can say in

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the context of our experience of transformation, “The Lord is the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:17) and “the Lord, the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:18, NASV). Also, in relation to the experiential fact of our being indwelt by God, Paul in Romans 8:9-11 interchangeably uses “the Spirit of God,” “the Spirit of Christ,” “Christ,” and “the Spirit of Him” (the Father). Furthermore, in Acts 16:6-7 Luke interchangeably uses “the Holy Spirit” and “the Spirit of Jesus” in reference to the same experiences of being led by the Lord.

Based upon all the facts and aspects of the Triune God that are revealed in Scripture, God is *triune* — uniquely one and distinctly three! However, this is not to be held as a mere doctrinal belief (James 2:19); but rather, we should all seek to be found in the reality and experience of the Triune God Himself. The apostle Paul describes this experience in Galatians 4:6: “And because you are sons, God has sent forth *the Spirit of His Son into [our] hearts, crying out, Abba, Father!*” Thus, it is within our hearts and with our mouths that we can enjoy the reality of the very life of the Triune God flowing into us, and through us, and out of us. Amen!

*The Triune God*

**The Scriptural Facts concerning  
the Triune God**

**I. God Is Uniquely One**

- A. In the Old Testament: Deut. 6:4; Isa. 44:6
- B. In the New Testament: Mark 12:29; 1 Cor. 8:4, 6

**II. God Is Distinctly Three**

- A. In the Old Testament: Gen. 1:26; Isa. 6:8
- B. In the New Testament: Matt. 28:19;  
2 Cor. 13:14

**III. All Three Are God**

- A. The Father is God: John 6:27; 1 Pet. 1:2
- B. The Son is God: Heb. 1:8; 1 John 5:20
- C. The Holy Spirit is God: Acts 5:3-4; 1 Cor. 2:10-12

**IV. All Three Are Eternal**

- A. The Father is eternal: Isa. 9:6; 1 Tim. 1:17
- B. The Son is eternal: John 1:1; Phil. 2:6
- C. The Spirit is eternal: Heb. 9:14

**V. All Three Exist at the Same Time**

- A. In eternity: John 17:5; Heb. 9:14
- B. In the Old Testament: Gen. 1:1-2 with John 1:1-3

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- C. In the New Testament: Matt. 3:16-17;  
John 14:16-17
- D. In experience: Rom. 8:9-11; Eph. 3:14-17
- E. In the New Jerusalem: Rev. 22:1

**VI. All Three Are One**

- A. The Father, Son, and Spirit: John 14:26  
with 15:26; 16:13-15
- B. The Son and the Father: John 10:30; 17:11, 21-22
- C. The Son and the Spirit: John 14:16-18;  
2 Cor. 3:17

**VII. All Three Mutually Indwell One Another**

- A. The Father, Son, and Spirit: John 16:13-15;  
Col. 2:9
- B. The Son and the Father: John 1:18; 10:38;  
14:9-10
- C. The Lord and the Spirit: John 14:16-18;  
Rev. 1:4; 4:5 with 5:6

**VIII. All Three Are in Us**

- A. The Father is in us: John 14:23; Eph. 4:6;  
John 4:23-24
- B. The Son is in us: Rom. 8:10; 2 Cor. 13:5;  
Col. 1:27

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C. The Holy Spirit is in us: John 14:17; 1 Cor. 3:16

**IX. All Three Operate as One in Man's Experience**

A. The Father sanctifies us: John 17:11, 17;  
1 Thess. 5:23

B. The Son sanctifies us: Eph. 5:25b-26; Heb. 2:11

C. The Holy Spirit sanctifies us: Rom. 15:16;  
1 Cor. 6:11

### 3 ► The Person of Christ

**I**n the Scriptures God has given a clear revelation concerning the Person of Christ. This revelation is composed of countless items, including Christ as the major focus of *all* Scripture (Luke 24:27, 44-45) as well as “the unsearchable riches of Christ” preached by the apostle Paul (Eph. 3:8). To consider the Person of Christ is, on the one hand, to open up the vast realm of the Godhead itself, for “in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Col. 2:9). On the other hand, it is to look into all that it means for Christ to be identified with humanity, a matter that He Himself introduced when He asked, “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” (Matt. 16:13).

Indeed, the revelation of Christ’s person is an inexhaustible sphere. There are, however, three major facts that may be considered the most crucial in having the proper biblical understanding concerning Him. These three facts are (1) Jesus Christ is fully God, (2) Jesus Christ is fully man, and (3) Jesus Christ is one person, in whom the divine nature and the human nature simulta-

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neously coexist. To believe and confess these facts is to accurately answer the question of all questions posed by the Lord Himself in Matthew 22:42, “What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?”

### *Jesus Christ Is Fully God*

In both the Old and New Testaments, we clearly see that Jesus Christ is fully God. In Psalm 102:24-27 we read, <sup>24</sup> “*O my God . . . Your years are throughout all generations.*” <sup>25</sup> “*Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands.*” <sup>26</sup> “*They will perish, but You will endure; yes, all of them will grow old like a garment; like a cloak You will change them, and they will be changed.*” <sup>27</sup> “*But You are the same, and Your years will have no end.*” This portion of the Word is praise given directly to God Himself, yet in Hebrews 1:8-12 this same portion is quoted and applied to Christ!

Another passage that reveals that Christ is fully God is the Old Testament prophecy concerning Christ in Isaiah 7:14: “Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name *Immanuel [God with us]*.” This prophecy is specifically fulfilled in Matthew 1:20-23 and

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refers directly to Christ, who is “*God with us*”! And Isaiah 9:6, a definite prophecy concerning the Person of Christ, clearly reveals that He is God: “For unto us *a Child* is born, unto us *a Son* is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, *Mighty God*, [Eternal] Father, Prince of Peace.” The Child and Son here is called both “Mighty God” and “Eternal Father.” This proves that Jesus Christ is God!

In addition to these examples from the Old Testament, there are numerous verses in the New Testament that reveal that Jesus Christ is fully God. In the first chapter of John’s Gospel, verses 1-2 and 14 disclose that the incarnated Christ is God: <sup>1</sup> “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and *the Word was God*. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. . . . <sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” According to these verses, Christ was not only God in the beginning, but He was and is the very God Himself.

In the Gospels many of the verses related to the Lord’s birth, baptism, human living, death, and resurrection show either directly from God or through angels and men that the Lord is the Son of God. To be called the Son of God means that He is deity itself and reveals that He is equal with God (see John 5:17-19, 25; Phil. 2:6). The

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word spoken by the angel Gabriel, who was sent from God to announce Jesus' conception, reveals that the Lord is deity: "He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest. . . . that Holy One who is to be born will be called *the Son of God*" (Luke 1:32, 35). God's own testimony at both the baptism and transfiguration of Jesus also reveals His deity: "And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, This is *My beloved Son*, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17); and "behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is *My beloved Son*, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!" (Matt. 17:5). When the Lord first began calling people to follow Him, Nathanael in John 1:49 declared, "Rabbi, You are *the Son of God!*" After the Lord walked on the sea and calmed the wind, the disciples also declared in Matthew 14:33, "Truly You are *the Son of God.*" The centurion and those with him at the time of the Lord's death proclaimed, "Truly this was *the Son of God!*" (Matt. 27:54). All these verses testify that Jesus Christ is God.

The Gospel of John contains many verses related to the deity of Christ. For example, in John 10:30-36 after the Lord said, "*I and [the] Father are one,*" the Jews accused Him, "You, being *a Man*, make Yourself God." The Lord not only did not deny such a claim but even

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vindicated Himself, confirming that it was indeed true. In John 20:28 the Lord readily received Thomas' confession concerning Himself, "My Lord and *my God!*"

The following are some of the key verses in the Epistles that reveal that Jesus Christ is fully God: Romans 9:5, "Of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, *Christ* came, *who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen*"; Philippians 2:5b-6, "*Christ Jesus: who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped*" (ASV); Colossians 1:15, "*He [Christ Jesus] is the image of the invisible God*"; Colossians 2:2, "The [full] knowledge of *the mystery of God, [Christ]*"; Colossians 2:9, "For *in Him [Christ]* dwells all the fullness of *the Godhead* bodily"; 1 Timothy 3:16, "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; *He [Christ as God] who* was manifested in the flesh" (ASV); 1 John 5:20, "And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in *His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God* and eternal life." Finally, in Revelation 22:1 we read of "the throne of God and of the Lamb." The *one* throne is shared by God and the Lamb, showing the deity of Christ.

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*Heresies regarding Jesus Christ as God*

The biblical revelation that Jesus Christ is fully God nullifies the heresies of the Ebionites and the Arians, who denied and undermined His Godhead. The Ebionites were a Jewish sect in the first century that held to a belief in the humanity of Christ yet rejected His deity. Their heretical teaching is propagated today among the modernists, who believe that Jesus was merely a man who bore a special relationship with God. These modernists deny that Jesus Christ is God in the flesh.

The Arian heresy, which flourished in the third and fourth centuries, taught that Christ was not fully equal with God, but that He was created by God before the ages. This resulted in a belief that there was a time when Christ did not exist. Arianism also taught that the Son of God was liable to fall and that He became the Son of God by adoption, not by nature. Although He was called God in Scripture, the Arians claimed that He was not really such, but was God in name only. They would admit that Christ was a creature transcendently near to God, but would not acknowledge Him as fully God. In A.D. 325 the Council of Nicea condemned Arianism as heretical and formulated a creed that used a word which expressed that Christ was not merely “like the Father” (*homoiousios* —

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ὁμοουσιος), but was, without any qualification, “identical with” or “of the same substance with” the Father (*homoousios*—ὁμοουσιος).

Thus, according to the revelation of Scripture which was confirmed at Nicea, Christ is not merely a man as the Ebionites taught, nor is He a partial God as the Arians taught; but He is, *de facto* (actually), fully God, possessing all the qualities of deity and the Godhead.

### *Jesus Christ Is Fully Man*

The fact that Jesus Christ is fully man is revealed in both the Old and New Testaments. The first prophecy related to Christ in His humanity is Genesis 3:15. In this verse Christ is referred to as the seed of the woman that would come and bruise the head of the serpent, the devil. In the fullness of time, Christ became the seed of the woman, being born of a woman (Gal. 4:4); that is, He became a man, and through His death destroyed the devil (Heb. 2:14). Also, Moses prophesied in Deuteronomy 18:15 concerning Christ in His humanity: “The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, *from your brethren*. Him you shall hear.” This verse is applied to Christ in Acts 3:22-23 and shows us that in order for Christ to be this Prophet, He had to be

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one of the brothers of the Israelites. In other words, He needed to become a man.

The prophecy of Christ in Isaiah 11:1 also reveals that He is fully man: “There shall come forth a Rod *from the stem of Jesse*, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.” Based on verses 2-5 that follow, we see that this prophecy refers to Christ in His humanity, as one born from the line of David. The entire prophecy concerning Christ in Isaiah 53 is related to the conditions and experiences of a man. In Daniel 7:13-14, the prophet declared, <sup>13</sup> “I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like *the Son of Man*, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. <sup>14</sup> Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed.” Here, in the context of receiving the kingdom from God, Christ is referred to in His status as a man. Finally, Zechariah markedly prophesied concerning Christ as a man: “Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, against *the Man who is My Companion*, says the LORD of hosts. Strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered; then I will turn My hand against the little ones” (Zech. 13:7). The Lord Jesus

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applies this verse to Himself in Matthew 26:31, confirming that He is indeed a man.

The New Testament is filled with Scripture that shows that Jesus Christ is fully man. The most obvious examples are the more than fifty references in the Gospels that the Lord makes concerning Himself as “the Son of Man.” The Lord’s frequent use of this title shows how much He intended to convey to all around Him the fact that He was a complete man, and that He was taking the standing of a man in order to accomplish God’s purpose. The following are a few of the “Son of Man” passages: Matthew 8:20; 9:6; 10:23; 12:8; Mark 8:31, 38; 9:9; 14:62; Luke 17:22, 24; 19:10; 22:22; John 1:51; 3:13; 6:62; 12:23; 13:31.

The verses in the New Testament that refer to the Lord being a man are of two categories. One category covers His life and ministry from His birth to His crucifixion. The other category covers all the verses referring to the Lord as a man from the time of His resurrection through His ascension and exaltation and present ministry as High Priest.

The following points testify that from His birth to His crucifixion He was fully man: in Matthew 1:1 He is “the Son of Abraham” and “the Son of David”; in Matthew 1:16 and Luke 1:30-31 He was conceived in and born of the virgin Mary; in Luke 2:21-24 He was presented in the

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temple as a child, proving He had definitely become a man; in Luke 2:40-52 He, as a boy, “grew and became strong.” He had the normal living of a boy growing into manhood; in Matthew 13:55 He is called “the carpenter’s son,” and Mark 6:3 says that He is “the carpenter”; in Matthew 4:3-4, after His baptism and during His being tempted by the devil, He spoke in the position of a man when He declared, “*Man* shall not live by bread alone”; in John 12:23 He entered into His crucifixion as “the Son of Man”; in Matthew 26:2 He again related to His crucifixion as “the Son of Man.” Thus, we can see that from His birth to His crucifixion, Jesus Christ is fully man.

When we say that Christ is fully man, we are not referring merely to the time from His birth to His crucifixion. But we are also referring to the time of His resurrection, including His ascension, exaltation, and present ministry as High Priest. In other words, from the point of Jesus Christ being incarnated and putting on humanity, He has existed and will henceforth exist as one Person with two natures, divine and human.

After His resurrection, according to Luke 24:36-43, the Lord Jesus continued to be fully man, with flesh and bones, having the ability to eat as a human. When Stephen was being martyred in Acts 7:55-56, he saw Christ in the heavens as “the *Son of Man* standing at the

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right hand of God.” In 1 Corinthians 15:45 and 47, Paul refers to the Lord Jesus in His resurrected state as “*the last Adam*” and “*the second Man.*” In the present dispensing of the gift in grace in Romans 5:15, the Lord Jesus is referred to as “*the one Man, Jesus Christ.*” Finally, in the classic passage from 1 Timothy 2:5, the present mediatorship of Christ is described: “For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, *the Man Christ Jesus.*” All these verses, and more, clearly reveal that now in resurrection and ascension, Jesus Christ is still fully a man. Thus, Christ is both fully God and fully man. He is the unique God-man.

### *Heresies regarding Jesus Christ as Man*

The revelation of the Bible that Jesus Christ is fully man nullifies the two heresies known as Docetism and Apollinarianism. These heresies denied and undermined His manhood. The Docetists were a group of Gnostics in the first and second centuries who believed in the divinity of Christ but completely denied His humanity. They were called Docetists based on the Greek verb *dokein* (δοκεῖν), which means *to appear*, or *to seem to be*. According to their belief, all matter was essentially evil. Thus, the Docetists concluded that Christ’s whole earthly life was

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a mere appearance or illusion. They considered the physical body of Christ as not being real flesh and blood, but as merely being a deceptive, transient phantom. From this, they taught that He did not suffer, die, and resurrect. It is this Docetic heresy that the apostle John warns against in 1 John 4:1-6 and 2 John 7-9. The Docetists did not believe that Jesus Christ had come in the flesh.

The Apollinarian heresy also undermined the Person of Christ in respect to His complete and full humanity. This heresy was introduced in the fourth century by Apollinaris, a bishop of Laodicea. He taught the full divinity of Christ but denied that Christ had a complete humanity, saying that He had a body and a soul, but not a human spirit. According to Apollinaris, the human spirit was replaced by the Divine Nature or Logos. Thus, in his scheme, Christ was not a complete human. This heresy was condemned by the Council of Constantinople in A.D. 381.

It is important that these heresies involving our Lord's humanity be exposed and condemned in order to preserve the integrity of the Lord's real and complete human nature. Indeed, the redemption of man's spirit and soul and body depends upon a Savior who also fully possesses all three parts. Anything less than a complete human cannot provide a complete redemption.

*The Person of Christ*

*Jesus Christ Is One Person  
with Two Natures*

Throughout the New Testament the Person of Christ is revealed to be both God and man simultaneously. He is fully God and fully man, possessing a divine nature and a human nature. However, He is never revealed as two persons, but always and only as one Person. Both His divine nature and human nature, each being complete and intact, concur in His one Person. It was due to the realization of Christ being both God and man in one Person that the term “God-man” was first coined by the early church father Origen (A.D. 185-254) (*De Principiis*, bk. 2, chap. 6, sec. 3). This was a term that briefly summarized the New Testament revelation of the one Person of Christ simultaneously possessing two natures. It is like the term *triune*, which refers to the New Testament revelation of God being both uniquely one and distinctly three. The Triune God simply means the Three-One God. Similarly, Christ being called the God-man expresses the truth that He is one Person with two natures.

The New Testament clearly reveals that Christ is one person with two distinct natures of divinity and humanity, yet it does not have a specific word to describe the relationship between the two natures. Exactly *how* the

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divinity and humanity coexist together in Christ's one person is not a matter taken up by the writers of the New Testament. However, the Old Testament does supply a word to describe the relationship between the two natures of Christ in His one person. That word is found in the type of Christ portrayed in the meal offering in Leviticus 2:1-16. The verse that brings together the humanity and divinity of Christ by means of the type is Leviticus 2:4, which says, "And when thou offerest an oblation of a meal-offering baken in the oven, it shall be unleavened cakes of fine flour mingled with oil, or unleavened wafers anointed with oil" (ASV).

First, it should be noted that in typology the "unleavened cakes of fine flour" signify the fine, sinless humanity of the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 5:7-8; Heb. 4:15). Second, the "oil" in typology signifies the Spirit, which is equivalent to the divinity of the Lord Jesus (Rom. 1:3-4). Third, the relationship existing between the two substances in the type, the fine flour and the oil, is described by the word "mingled." Thus, "mingled" is a scriptural expression that may be used to speak of *how* the human nature and the divine nature exist together in the one Person of Christ. The Old Testament type supplies the word "mingled" to describe the relationship between the two natures of Christ. However, it is the New Testament revelation of

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Christ's Person that supplies the precise meaning and proper understanding of the term "mingled."

In the first five centuries of the church there was a protracted history of doctrinal debates concerning the person of Christ. Eventually, Cyril of Alexandria in the fifth century coined the technical theological term "hypostatic union." This term describes the relationship between the two natures in Christ. Although the term is not biblical, it was an attempt to simply say that the union of the natures in Christ was related to His one Person, or His one *hypostasis*, as the Greeks termed it. In other words, the natures did not merely coexist side by side, nor did they become confused; rather, they remained distinct and intact in His one Person.

The term "hypostatic union," as it is generally understood in orthodox theology, is acceptable and may be used to describe the relationship between the two natures in Christ. However, the term "mingle" is a biblical term and is therefore preferred over the more technical term "hypostatic union," provided that the term "mingle" is used with the same meaning as "hypostatic union."

The biblical meaning of the divine nature and the human nature being mingled in the Person of Christ is simply that He is one Person with two distinct natures that simultaneously coexist. This mingling is without confu-

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sion; that is, the distinct integrity of each nature is not destroyed but remains intact. Neither is this mingling an absorption of the human nature into the divine, producing a third nature and making Christ neither quite God nor quite man. This mingling is also not a mere association of the two natures side by side. The mingling of the two natures in Christ, according to the biblical type of the meal offering in Leviticus 2:4, portrays a relationship between them that preserves their distinct integrity while they inseparably exist within His one Person.

### *Heresies regarding Christ's Two Natures*

The biblical revelation that Jesus Christ is one person with two natures nullifies the heresies of Nestorianism and Eutychianism, both of which undermined the integrity of Christ's two natures in His one Person. The Nestorians, who arose in the fifth century, taught that the two natures of Christ are ever distinct and separate, to the point of making Christ two persons instead of one. They denied the proper organic mingling of the two natures and reduced it to a mere moral union, which made Christ simply God *and* man, instead of the God-man. The Nestorians divided the natures into two separate persons, resulting in there being no real incarnation but merely an outward alliance between God and man. This heresy was

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condemned at the third ecumenical council at Ephesus in A.D. 431.

The Eutychian heresy, also flourishing in the fifth century, taught a mingling of the two natures of Christ that differed from the mingling revealed in Leviticus 2:4. Eutyches misused the term mingle by denying the distinctness and coexistence of Christ's divinity and humanity. He claimed that the two natures mingled and merged into one and became a third kind of nature that was neither fully human nor fully divine. This heresy implied that the human nature was absorbed into the divine nature. It was expressed in varying degrees under the teaching of the Monophysites, who tended to reduce the two natures of Christ into one, destroying their distinct coexistence. Eutychianism and Monophysitism were condemned at the Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 451.

Despite the various attacks on the integrity of Christ's Person, the truth revealed in the Bible stands firm — Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man, and in Him the divine and human natures simultaneously coexist. These facts are revealed truth and are essential to the entire structure of the Christian faith. Without this scriptural revelation concerning the Person of Christ, every other major truth in the Word of God collapses. If Jesus Christ is not fully God, as the Ebionites and Arians claimed that

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He was not, then God becomes a liar (1 John 5:10) and the truth of the Trinity (Matt. 28:19) breaks down. If Jesus Christ is not fully man, as the Docetists and the Apollinarians asserted that He was not, then man is without hope. Apart from a real incarnation (John 1:1, 14) there cannot be redemption for man (Heb. 9:12; Acts 20:28) and salvation to the uttermost (Heb. 4:14-16; 7:25). If Jesus Christ is not the unique God-man in whom the divine and human natures simultaneously coexist, as the Nestorians and Eutychians proposed, then the Person of Christ is neither God nor man. God's purpose of conforming man to Christ's image and building the church cannot be accomplished without a Christ who is fully God and fully man (Rom. 8:3-4, 29; 1 Tim. 2:5; Matt. 16:13, 16, 18).

Thank God! Jesus Christ is God! Jesus Christ is Man! Jesus Christ is the God-man! We enjoy the reality of the Trinity! Man has hope! We have redemption and full salvation! God's purpose for man is being accomplished — He is producing a builded church with His redeemed people who are being conformed to the image of the firstborn Son.

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**The Scriptural Facts concerning  
the Person of Christ**

**I. Jesus Christ Is Fully God**

- A. In the Old Testament: Psa. 102:24-27 with Heb. 1:8-12; Isa. 7:14 with Matt. 1:20-23; Isa. 9:6
- B. In the New Testament: John 1:1-2, 14; 5:17-19; Luke 1:32, 35; Matt. 3:17; 17:5; 14:33; 27:54; John 10:30-36; 20:28; Rom. 9:5; Phil. 2:5-6; Col. 1:15; 2:2, 9; 1 Tim. 3:16; 1 John 5:20; Rev. 22:1

**II. Jesus Christ Is Fully Man**

- A. In the Old Testament: Gen. 3:15 with Gal. 4:4; Heb. 2:14; Deut. 18:15 with Acts 3:22-23; Isa. 11:1-5; Isa. 53:1-12; Dan. 7:13-14; Zech. 13:7 with Matt. 26:31
- B. In the New Testament:
  - 1. The Son of Man – Matt. 8:20; 9:6; 10:23; 12:8; Mark 8:31, 38; 9:9; 14:62; Luke 17:22, 24; 19:10; 22:22; John 1:51; 3:13; 6:62; 12:23; 13:31
  - 2. Aspects of His manhood – Matt. 1:1, 16; Luke 1:30-31; 2:21-24, 40-52; Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3; Matt. 4:3-4; John 12:23; Matt. 26:2; Luke 24:36-43; Acts 7:55-56; 1 Cor. 15:45, 47; Rom. 5:15; 1 Tim. 2:5

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**III. Jesus Christ Is One Person with Two Natures**

- A. In the Old Testament: Lev. 2:1-16; Isa. 9:6
- B. In the New Testament: John 1:1-2, 14; Rom. 1:3-4; Heb. 1:5-8; 4:14-15; Phil. 2:6-11; Col. 2:9

## 4 ► The Bible

### *The Bible Is the Source of the Beliefs and Practices of All Genuine Believers*

**T**he Bible is the one unique source of the beliefs and practices of all true Christians. Indeed, the Bible establishes itself as the source of authority for what we believe and do. We see this truth presented by the Lord Jesus in Luke 24:25-27: <sup>25</sup> “Then He said to them, O foolish ones, and slow of heart *to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!* <sup>26</sup> Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory? <sup>27</sup> *And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.*” In these verses the Lord Jesus appealed to the Bible as the source of authority to confirm the validity of His death and resurrection. This same appeal to Scripture is repeated by the apostle Paul in Acts 24:14 when he testified before Felix: “But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, *believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets.*” And again in

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Acts 26:22 before King Agrippa, Paul appealed to Scripture as the source of his beliefs and practices: “Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great, *saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come.*” These examples from the practice of the Lord Jesus and the apostle Paul demonstrate the truth that the Bible should be the one unique source for all beliefs and practices of all genuine believers.

In addition to the above examples, there are also clear passages from Scripture that specifically teach that the Bible is to be the unique source of the beliefs and practices of all Christians. One such passage is 2 Timothy 3:16: “All Scripture is [God-breathed], and is profitable for [teaching], for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” This verse establishes Scripture as the unique source and authority from which to derive our teaching, to reprove our errors, to correct or set straight (Greek: *εἰπανοσρψωσις*=a restoration or recovery to an upright state) our beliefs and practices, and to instruct and train us in a practical life of righteousness. In other words, beliefs and practices that are claimed to be “the inspiration of the Spirit” or “the leading of the Lord” must be examined and verified by the Scriptures as to their accuracy and truth. This includes the interpretations of

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Scripture based upon tradition and the teachings of men (Mark 7:7-9, 13). Everything in the realm of belief and practice must come under review and be judged by the standard of the Word of God. Thus, the Bible alone is the one unique source of the beliefs and practices of Christians.

### *The Principle of Recovery*

The logical result of believing that the Bible is the one unique source of beliefs and practices is that you must hold to the principle of recovery. This principle is inseparable from the belief that the Bible is the unique source for all beliefs and practices; that is, because God's Word is the standard, we must always endeavor to come back to the Scriptures for both what we believe and what we practice. To come back to the Scriptures simply means to seek to recover the truths and practices that have been misused, corrupted, neglected, or totally lost through the centuries of church history. Thus, the principle of recovery means the restoration of something back to its normal condition. The proper and normal condition for God's children today is to believe and practice the Word of God as it is recorded in the 66 books of the Bible.

The apostle John expressed the idea of recovery during the period of the New Testament when he said in

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1 John 2:24, “As for you, let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father” (NASV). During the time John wrote this, it was obvious that some of the believers had already drifted away from the original source of God’s Word. Thus, he appeals to the believers to go back to that which they heard from the beginning. This indicates that in his day the apostle John was already in the principle of recovery. Such a position was based upon his belief in the original truth of God’s Word, which had been lost and corrupted before the end of the first century. Thus, to believe that Scripture is the unique source for all belief and practice necessarily results in holding to the principle of recovery. With the maze of two thousand years of church history behind us, in which precious truths and practices have been lost or damaged by the traditions of men, to attempt to come back to the Bible as the standard and norm for belief and practice is to hold to the principle of recovery. Thus, a Bible-believing and Bible-practicing Christian is knowingly or unknowingly following the principle of recovery.

### *The Bible Is the Complete Divine Revelation*

The holy Bible, containing 66 books, is the complete

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divine revelation. According to Revelation 22:18-19, nothing should be added to or taken away from the Word of God: <sup>18</sup> “For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; <sup>19</sup> and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.” The fact that the Bible is the complete divine revelation is also expressed in Jude 3: “Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was *once for all* delivered unto the saints” (ASV). In the minds of the writers of the New Testament, the faith was “*once for all* delivered unto the saints.” There is no need to add another book to the Bible’s 66 books to make it complete. It is complete and final.

Neither is any other book on the same level as the Bible. Other writings may help us to understand the Bible, but they are still fallible. The Bible alone is the one infallible source for all faith and practice. This fact is in accordance with the statement made by the Lord Jesus in John 10:35: “the Scripture cannot be broken.” The

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Scriptures alone are infallible and cannot be broken.

Furthermore, the apostles and prophets' revelation found in the Scriptures is final and complete. As such, it is the unique foundation upon which believers are built. Ephesians 2:19-20 makes this clear: <sup>19</sup> "Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, <sup>20</sup> having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone." We need not look for another foundation or attempt to create a new foundation upon which to build. Rather, the initial apostolic foundation laid in the first century and embodied in the 27 books of the New Testament Scriptures is the same foundation for us in the twentieth century. Thus, the first-century apostles are *our apostles*. This is in harmony with the apostle Peter's words: <sup>1</sup> "This is now, beloved, the second epistle that I write unto you; and in both of them I stir up your sincere mind by putting you in remembrance; <sup>2</sup> that ye should remember the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and the commandment of the Lord and Saviour through *your apostles*" (2 Pet. 3:1-2, ASV). The words spoken by the apostles *are* the contents of the New Testament. Thus, the New Testament books, together with the 39 books of the Old Testament, make up the

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complete divine revelation and are the foundation upon which all beliefs and practices should be built.

#### *The Entire Bible Is Verbally Inspired*

Not only is the Bible complete and final, but in all its parts, whether related to matters of faith, practice, history, science, or whatever recorded details there may be, it is *all* word by word inspired by God. This belief is based upon the testimony of Scripture itself. In 2 Peter 1:20-21 we read, <sup>20</sup> “Knowing this first, that *no prophecy of Scripture* is of any private interpretation, <sup>21</sup> for prophecy never came by the will of man, but *holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.*” From these verses we can observe that the Holy Spirit is exclusively the source of all Scripture. The emphasis upon “*no prophecy of Scripture*” indicates that no part of Scripture is derived from man’s own interpretation or ideas; neither are the Scriptures the product of man’s will or desire. The entire Bible comes from the source of the Holy Spirit.

Also, in 2 Timothy 3:16 we read, “All Scripture is [God-breathed], and is profitable for [teaching], for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” The adjective “all” clearly modifies the noun “Scripture” and tells us that nothing less than every word in the Bible

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is God-breathed. Although some versions, such as the King James Version, translate the verse, “All Scripture is *given by inspiration of God,*” in Greek the italicized phrase here is a compound word,  $\psi\epsilon\omicron\varsigma\pi\nu\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\tau\omicron\varsigma$ , and is best rendered “God-breathed.” This means that inspiration is word by word and extends to all the written Scriptures.

It is not that only some portions of the Bible are divinely inspired while other portions are humanly inspired. For example, the Scriptures record the history of Satan’s words and man’s sin, including such things as lies, human concepts, murders, and adultery; yet even these portions in whole and in part are equally the Word of God. Thus, the Scriptures do not merely *contain* the Word of God, but the Scriptures are, *de facto* (actually), the Word of God.

### *The Nature of the Bible Is Spirit and Life*

The next related and crucial truth is that the nature of the Bible is spirit and life, and as such it is intended to nourish us with the Lord Himself. The Lord Jesus defined the nature of His words when He said in John 6:63, “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The

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words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.” This verse defines the nature of the Lord’s own spoken words as spirit and life; yet the principle of this verse applies to the entire Bible (cf. Heb. 4:12; 1 Pet. 1:23-25). Thus, the nature of all God’s Word is spirit and life.

Second Timothy 3:16 also reveals the nature of the Bible when it says, “All Scripture is God-breathed.” In other words, along with the Scripture being revelation, truth, teaching, and doctrine, it bears the nature of God Himself, who is Spirit (John 4:24). The nature of every word in the Bible is spirit, and as such, the words can impart life while we are reading them. The pietistic Bible teacher John Albert Bengel expressed it well when commenting on 2 Timothy 3:16: “*It was divinely inspired*, not merely while it was written, God breathing through the writers, but also while it is being read, God breathing through the Scripture, and the Scripture breathing Him.”

When we realize that the nature of the Bible is spirit and life, then our handling of the Bible will not be merely to gain knowledge, but to be nourished with God Himself. The Lord Jesus handled the written Scriptures in this way. In Matthew 4:4 He said, “It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.” In other words, the Scriptures were nourishment to the Lord. Even “every word” was food to

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Him. He believed the Scriptures were not just letters on a page but words that were spirit and life and were proceeding (present tense) out through the mouth of God.

If the Bible is merely a book of knowledge to us for learning about facts, accounts, history, etc., then we will handle the Bible in the way of knowledge. But, if we realize that the nature of the Bible is spirit and life, and we approach it in that way, we will gain not only the proper knowledge but we will gain the nourishment in the Word. For example, the apostle Peter speaks of tasting the Lord in relationship to the Word: <sup>2</sup> “As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby [into salvation], <sup>3</sup> if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious” (1 Pet. 2:2-3).

The nature of the Bible is spirit and life for the purpose of nourishing us with the Lord Himself. This kind of realization will lead us to approach and handle the Word with prayer and openness to Him. By reading the Word with an exercised, praying spirit and attitude, we enjoy the Bible’s spirit-and-life nature being released into us. When warning the religious Jews about their improper way of handling the Scriptures, the Lord Jesus revealed that the proper way to handle the Scriptures was to come to Him to receive life. In John 5:38-40 He said, “But you do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He

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sent, Him you do not believe. You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.” To enjoy and receive the spirit and life that is in the Word we need to come to the Lord for life and feed on the Word with prayer. In this way the Word is spiritually assimilated into our being as we breathe in what God has breathed out.

### *The Bible Has a Central Focus*

The final and chief point to see about the Bible is to realize that it has *a central focus* revealed from Genesis to Revelation. Although the Bible includes many books, deals with a number of different subjects, and teaches various doctrines, there is still a central focus from beginning to end. This central focus is defined by the Lord Jesus in Luke 24. When He was systematically opening the Scriptures to the disciples as they walked along the road to Emmaus, He revealed that the central focus of the Scriptures was just *Himself*. Verse 27 says, “And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things *concerning Himself*.” Also, in speaking to His disciples in Luke 24:44-45, He indicated that He Himself was the central

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focus of the Bible: <sup>44</sup> “Then He said to them, These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms *concerning Me*. <sup>45</sup> And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.” These verses clearly reveal that Christ is the central focus of the Bible and that to properly understand the Scriptures we must see Him as the center.

By identifying the Scriptures as “the word of Christ” in Colossians 3:16, the apostle Paul also reveals that the Person of Christ is the central focus of the Bible. And again in Ephesians 3:8 he speaks of this central focus when he declares what the main burden of his ministry is: “To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles *the unsearchable riches of Christ*.” Paul continues in the following verses to sharpen this focus by speaking not only of the Person of Christ (v. 8), but also of the work of Christ (vv. 9-11). Thus, the central focus of the Bible becomes the Person and work of Christ. In Ephesians 3:9-11, Paul enlarges on his main burden by saying, <sup>9</sup> “And to make all men see what is the dispensation [administration] of the mystery [the one Body of Christ; cf. Eph. 3:2-6] <sup>10</sup> which for ages hath been hid in God who

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created all things; to the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the [heavenlies] might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God, <sup>11</sup> according to the eternal purpose which He [accomplished] in Christ Jesus our Lord” (ASV). These verses reveal that the main work of Christ in the universe is to carry out “the eternal purpose,” or the purpose of the ages, through the church. Thus, the central focus of the Bible is Christ with all the unsearchable riches of His Person, and the church as the product of His work.

When the central focus of the Bible — Christ and the church — is understood from Genesis to Revelation, the entire Bible becomes one harmonious whole. We are no longer reading 66 disconnected books with many isolated points. We now see the Bible as one unified record of the accomplishment of God’s eternal purpose flowing out of eternity past into time and on into eternity future.

The carrying out of this eternal purpose is seen in the Old Testament through the history of the nation of Israel with its types, promises, and prophecies about the Person and work of Christ. Then the eternal purpose is realized in the New Testament with the Person and work of Christ in His incarnation, human living, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and pouring out of the Holy Spirit to produce the church. Throughout the pages of the New

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Testament the work of Christ is centered on building the church (Matt. 16:18), which expresses God's multifarious wisdom to the universe (Eph. 3:10) and brings glory to Him (Eph. 3:21).

Ultimately, the eternal purpose flows into eternity future as described in Revelation 21 and 22. Here we see that the Person and work of Christ consummates in the holy city, New Jerusalem — God and man's habitation for eternity. This mutual habitation of God and man is the ultimate issue of the central focus of the Bible.

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**The Scriptural Facts  
concerning the Bible**

**I. The Bible Is the Complete Divine Revelation**

— Rev. 22:18-19; John 10:35; Eph. 2:19-20;  
2 Pet. 3:1-2; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20-21;  
3:15-16

**II. The Entire Bible Is Verbally Inspired**

— 2 Pet. 1:20-21; 2 Tim. 3:16; Matt. 4:4

**III. The Nature of the Bible Is Spirit and Life**

— John 6:63; Heb. 4:12; 1 Pet. 1:23-25; 2:2-3;  
2 Tim. 3:16; Matt. 4:4; John 5:38-40

**IV. The Bible Has a Central Focus**

— Luke 24:27, 44-45; Col. 3:16 and Eph. 3:1-11;  
Rev. 21—22