

## The Divine Trinity and the Kingdom

The Gospel of Matthew stands out from the other Gospels in two matters: It reveals the Divine Trinity in plain words, and it announces the kingdom as the gospel (28:19; 3:2; 24:14). At first glance, the Divine Trinity and the kingdom of God do not have an obvious connection. God being triune speaks of the most wonderful and mysterious attribute of God's person, whereas the kingdom speaks of His reign. The Gospel that most clearly reveals the Triune God is also the Gospel that is most focused on the kingdom. The explanation for this can be found by examining the relationship between the kingdom and God's person in His economy.

When God moves to accomplish His economy, to obtain His purpose according to His heart's desire, He is revealed as the Triune God, the unique God, who is three yet one, one yet three. God's kingdom is related to the goal of God's economy; His plan for man does not end with redemption. The goal of God's economy is to obtain an expression of Himself in man by reproducing Himself in man. The kingdom in its most intrinsic sense is the expression of God's life in humankind. The constituents of God's kingdom, the kingdom people, are born of God with His life, which is the life of the Triune God (John 1:12-13; 3:3, 5). The kingdom people are one with God in life, and they are under the reigning of this life within them because God's life is a reigning life. In this life they reign over all things opposing God. The kingdom people are therefore the issue of the King entering into humankind and being reproduced, enlarged, and expressed.

Human beings are made kingdom people through the move of the Divine Trinity and through their experience of Him. The Gospel of Matthew begins with the incarnation of Christ. At the end of the book, when God's move has been consummated through Christ's crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, the Divine Trinity is further revealed for our experience. We, the nations of the earth, are to be baptized into the name of the Divine Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. To be baptized into the name of the Divine Trinity is to be put into His person, that is, into God Himself. The remaining books of the New Testament, especially the Epistles of Paul, Peter, and John, unfold the riches of this experience. The

Gospel of Matthew ends by showing the Divine Trinity, who has been consummated in His divine move and who is now available for our experience. The Divine Trinity in His divine move and in our experience makes us the kingdom people.

### The Preparation of the Divine Move

The first seventeen verses of the Gospel of Matthew present the genealogy of Christ. Concerning the matter of God's kingdom, this genealogy testifies to the King's antecedents, proving that Christ is the son of David and the son of Abraham. However, these verses may also be considered a full summary of God's move in the Old Testament, a move that was preparatory in nature. The names of those mentioned in the genealogy represent the history of God's move among His people.<sup>1</sup> God's move in the Old Testament was a move *among* man and *with* man; it was not a move *in* man as in the New Testament. For this reason, it was not His direct move for the accomplishment of His eternal economy. This indirect move is illustrated in the lives of persons such as Gideon and Samson (Judg. 6:1—8:32; 13:1—16:31). Undoubtedly, God enabled these men to deliver His people from the oppression of their enemies, but God did not move *in* them, only *with* them.

There is no doubt that God's move with them was powerful toward His enemies, but this move did not transform their character and living through the impartation of the divine life. Thus, they fell far short of the expression of God (e.g., 8:24-27, 30-31; 14:1-3; 16:1, 4). Nevertheless, through His move in the Old Testament, God arrived at the point where He could begin His direct move through incarnation. Through His dealings with the people of Israel and with the house of David in particular, He prepared certain vessels who would allow Him to begin His direct move, His move in man.

### The Divine Trinity in Incarnation

The first chapter of Matthew reveals the Divine Trinity in the incarnation of Christ. It is highly significant that the Divine Trinity is first revealed in the Scriptures in the context of the incarnation. In the Old Testament there are hints that God is triune, but there is no clear revelation. In

Genesis 1 the name of God in Hebrew, *Elohim*, is plural in number, hinting that He is triune (v. 26). In Exodus 3:15 Jehovah reveals that His name is the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. According to the history of God's move with these patriarchs, this name indicates that He is the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—the Triune God.

**H**owever, when God moved to enter into man through incarnation, aspects of His triune being became more evident. God entered into man when the Holy Spirit came upon a young virgin. Within the womb of Mary, a child was generated of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:18), and what was begotten in her was out of the Holy Spirit (v. 20).<sup>2</sup> The holy thing that was born was the Son of God (Luke 1:35). The child would be called Jesus, meaning “Jehovah the Savior,” and Emmanuel, meaning “God with us,” denoting God the Father (Matt. 1:21, 23). Thus, the Holy Spirit, the Son, and the Father were all referenced and involved in the conception and birth of Jesus.

For this reason it is important to realize that the incarnation was not an incarnation of a separate person of the Trinity. According to John 1:1 and 14, it was the Word, who was with God and who was God, who became flesh. The designation *Word* speaks of God being embodied and expressed, just as a person's thought is embodied and expressed in his word. This is confirmed by Paul in Colossians 2:9, where he says that all the fullness of the Godhead (the Father, the Son, and the Spirit) dwells in Christ bodily. The fullness of the Triune Godhead was embodied in Christ and born in humanity through incarnation. The Holy Spirit generated the Son with the Father's divine essence (John 4:24); thus, the Son who was born was spoken of as the eternal Father in Isaiah 9:6. The little child who was born was the Son of God, but not the Son alone; He was the Son with the Father by the Spirit as His divine essence (Rom. 1:4).

The incarnation involves more than just God dwelling with man or even in man; the incarnation points to the mingling of God and man. The conception and birth of the Lord Jesus was a conception involving two lives and natures, the divine and the human. The child who was born, the God-man Jesus, was the mingling of the divine life and the human life. This wonderful fact is typified by the meal offering in Leviticus 2, an offering consisting of

fine flour mingled with oil (vv. 4-5). The fine flour of the meal offering signifies the humanity of Christ, and the oil signifies the Spirit, the divine element of Christ. In the meal offering, fine flour and oil were mingled together as one entity, signifying that the divinity of Christ was mingled with humanity. The word *mingling* indicates that both substances were present without a third substance being produced; the two are inseparably joined, yet distinguishable in their combination. The oil was with the fine flour by the way of mingling, which means that it was forever inseparably combined with the flour. When the offerer partook of the meal offering, he partook of both the flour and the oil simultaneously. The meal offering, therefore, typifies the mingling of God and man in the incarnation of Christ.

In the incarnation of Christ, when God was joined to and mingled with man, the Divine Trinity was first revealed. Before the incarnation, God had moved only with and among men. God's eternal economy is to obtain man as His corporate expression by dispensing Himself into man in order to be mingled with man. This is the reason He is revealed as being triune. His economy can be carried out only because He is triune. If He desired merely to

be the Creator of the universe, it would be sufficient for Him to be one in person.

**I**ndeed, before it is clearly revealed in the New Testament that He desires to be one with humanity in life and nature, the depiction of His attribute of being one is central to the Old Testament: “Hear, O Israel, Jehovah is our God; Jehovah is one” (Deut. 6:4). But if He were only one, He would not be able to accomplish His eternal plan to obtain a dwelling place in man for His satisfaction and rest. For this He is revealed as being triune. Hence, when He began His direct move to impart Himself into humanity through incarnation, His triunity was revealed, and as the New Testament unfolds, His attribute of being triune becomes more and more manifest. Eventually, the New Testament ends with the New Jerusalem, which is the consummation of His eternal economy. The outstanding characteristic of this marvelous sign is the consummated Triune God, who is fully mingled with redeemed, regenerated, transformed, and glorified tripartite man.<sup>3</sup> God has always been triune from eternity, but He revealed Himself as the Triune

THE GOAL OF GOD'S ECONOMY  
IS TO OBTAIN AN EXPRESSION OF HIMSELF  
IN MAN BY REPRODUCING HIMSELF IN MAN.  
THE KINGDOM IN ITS MOST INTRINSIC SENSE  
IS THE EXPRESSION OF GOD'S LIFE  
IN HUMANKIND.

---

God for the first time in Matthew 1 in the incarnation of Christ.

### **The Divine Trinity in Human Living**

Through incarnation, the Triune God was mingled with man. Because the Lord Jesus was the mingling of the divine life and the human life, the life that He lived was both divine and human. He lived by denying His human life in order to express the divine life (John 5:19, 30). This living developed the mingling of God and man into the kingdom of God in its reality, first in Christ individually (Luke 17:21) and then in His believers corporately (Rom. 14:17).

**T**wo instances in Matthew reveal the Divine Trinity in His divine move in the human living of Jesus. First, in the Lord's baptism and anointing (Matt. 3:13-17), the Lord Jesus came to John the Baptist at the Jordan River in order to be baptized by him. John at first refused, saying that it was he who needed to be baptized by the Lord. The Lord responded, however, saying, "Permit it for now, for it is fitting for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness" (v. 15). In His humanity the Lord Jesus was without sin (1 Pet. 2:22). Nevertheless, in order to fulfill righteousness in its most full and complete sense, it was necessary for Him to be baptized. Baptism signifies death and burial. When the Lord was baptized, He indicated that He was putting His human life to death in order that He might live by the divine life. Even though the Lord's human life was without sin, it was still a life of the old creation. Therefore, it could not fulfill all righteousness in its fullest meaning. His human life needed to be put to death through baptism in order for His divine life to be expressed in His human living.

The Divine Trinity in His divine move is revealed in the Lord's baptism. As the Lord came up out of the water,

the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming upon Him. And behold, a voice out of the heavens, saying, This is My Son, the Beloved, in whom I have found My delight. (Matt. 3:16-17)

As the new King, the Lord needed to be anointed with the Spirit and introduced as God's beloved Son by the Father for the carrying out of His ministry. It would be wrong to think, however, that the Lord Jesus did not have the Spirit before His baptism. As we have seen, He was born of the Spirit. From His birth the Spirit of God was within Him as His divinity. This was a matter of His existence, and we may designate this aspect of the Spirit as essential. For His work, however, He needed to be empowered and authorized, which required the Spirit in the further aspect of anointing. We may designate this aspect of the Spirit as economical, because it concerns power and authority for

ministry. In the same principle, while the Father was speaking from the heavens concerning the Son, His divine life was in the Son, as it had been all the time from His birth (John 6:46).

The second reference to the Divine Trinity in the Lord's human living is in Matthew 12:28. Here, the Lord responded to those who had blasphemously accused Him of casting out demons by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons. He said that if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided and his kingdom cannot stand. Then He continued, "But if I, by the Spirit of God, cast out the demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you." In this statement the Lord revealed that in carrying out His ministry, He did not act individualistically, nor did He work for the benefit of Himself. Rather, whatever He did, He did by the Spirit and for the kingdom of God. This reveals the excellent and beautiful coordination that exists among the three of the Divine Trinity.

Although the Son, the second of the Divine Trinity, was the One who was commissioned for the ministry, He did not minister by Himself alone; rather, He chose to do everything by the Spirit, the third of the Divine Trinity. Furthermore, whatever He did was not for Himself but for the benefit of God the Father, the first of the Divine Trinity. In this, the Lord Jesus established a pattern of coordination for His believers, who are the constituents of His kingdom and the members of His Body. Whatever we do in Christ will not be for ourselves but for the interest and right of God on this earth.

### **The Divine Trinity in Crucifixion**

In incarnation the Triune God was joined to and mingled with man, and by the Lord's human living, a pattern was established for the believers to live the kingdom life. Due to the fall of man, however, redemption is needed in order for God's economy to be carried out in man. The accomplishment of redemption through the Son's vicarious death was not an act of the Son of God alone. This would have been contrary to the principle of the divine move as seen in the incarnation, in which the Father was in and with the Son, and the Son's existence and living were by the Spirit. He was conceived of the Spirit essentially in His birth as a man, and He was later anointed with the Spirit economically for His ministry among men.

**W**hen Jesus was crucified, the Father and the Spirit were involved. When Christ was dying on the cross, the entire Divine Trinity was involved. When Jesus died on the cross, He died as a God-man whose divinity had been mingled with humanity. This was a further step of the divine move taken by the Divine Trinity for the accomplishment of His economy. When the Son was incarnated, the fullness of the Godhead dwelt in Him

bodily, and when the Son was crucified, the blood of God was shed (Acts 20:28). The Son was not alone in accomplishing God's redemptive work; the Father was with Him. And the Son did not act alone in accomplishing redemption; He acted by the Spirit. Just as in His incarnation and human living, the Son was with the Father by the Spirit in His death.

Why then did the Lord Jesus cry out on the cross, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matt. 27:46)? God's forsaking of the Lord Jesus on the cross was not related to the Lord's divinity. When He was baptized, the Lord was anointed with the Spirit economically for His ministry and approved by the Father from the heavens. The Lord cried out these words when He was forsaken by God economically. He was forsaken at this point because He was bearing the sin of the whole world and being judged by God for this sin. The Spirit of God, who came upon Him at His baptism, left Him economically when He was being judged for the sin of the world. However, the Lord Jesus was not forsaken by God essentially when He was on the cross. He still possessed the Spirit as His divine essence when He was dying on the cross. Hebrews 9:14 tells us that Christ offered Himself without blemish to God through the eternal Spirit.

As a result, the blood of Christ has an eternal efficacy in contrast to the temporary efficacy of the blood of animal sacrifices under the old covenant. In Acts 20:28 the apostle Paul says that God obtained the church of God with "His own blood." Through the incarnation God was mingled with humanity and possessed human blood. On the cross God gave *His own blood* for the church. In the words of Charles Wesley, the hymn writer, "Amazing love! How can it be / That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?" and, "'Tis mystery all! The Immortal dies! / Who can explore His strange design?" (*Hymns*, #296).

The Lord Jesus' humanity qualified Him to be our Redeemer by giving Him human blood to shed in His substitutionary death on our behalf in order to redeem us from our sins, and His divinity afforded His redemption an eternal efficacy. Thus, His redemption is without limitation in its reach and power because His divinity imparts an eternal character to it. It transcends all boundaries of space and time, reaching farther than the farthest

plane, lower than the lowest depth, and extending in time from before the foundation of the world to the coming age and eternity.

### The Divine Trinity in Resurrection

The process of resurrection began even as the Lord was being crucified. Just as Christ passed through death by the eternal Spirit, He was resurrected by the Spirit, who was the essence of His divinity. While He was being put to death in the flesh, He was being made alive in the Spirit (1 Pet. 3:18). In this verse the flesh of Christ and the Spirit are in contrast to each other. In the flesh Christ was put to death, but while this was happening, Christ was being made alive in the Spirit. Here, *the Spirit* does not refer to the Holy Spirit but to the Spirit as the essence of Christ's divinity. As Christ died on the cross in the flesh, the Spirit, that is, His divinity, was making Him alive.

The Lord's resurrection began as the Roman soldiers were putting Him to death on the cross. As He was being killed in His flesh, He was being made alive in His spirit by the Spirit of His divinity. While Christ's body lay in the tomb, His Spirit was exceedingly active, indicating that His divinity was making Him alive. On the third day this process of being made

alive consummated in the physical resurrection of His body from the dead.

In Romans 1:4 Paul says that Christ "was designated the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness out of the resurrection of the dead." In this verse the Spirit of holiness is contrasted with the flesh of Christ in the previous verse. The flesh is His humanity, which was out of the seed of David, while the Spirit of holiness is His divinity, referring not to the person of the Holy Spirit of God but to the Spirit as the essence of Christ's divinity. The resurrection of Christ was His designation as the Son of God. Before His resurrection, Christ was the Son of God, but His humanity was not so designated, because His flesh was still part of the old creation and His humanity had not yet been incorporated into the divine sonship. But the resurrection brought His humanity into divinity, designating Him, even in His humanity, as the Son of God.

This powerful process was carried out according to the operation of the Spirit of holiness. Through death and

THE LORD DID NOT ACT INDIVIDUALISTICALLY,  
NOR DID HE WORK FOR THE BENEFIT OF  
HIMSELF. WHATEVER HE DID, HE DID BY  
THE SPIRIT AND FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD.  
THIS REVEALS THE EXCELLENT AND  
BEAUTIFUL COORDINATION THAT EXISTS  
AMONG THE THREE OF THE DIVINE TRINITY.



---

resurrection His divinity, which had been contained and concealed during the thirty-three and a half years of His life, was released and manifested in His human body. Resurrection designated Him to be the Son of God not only in His divinity but also in His humanity.

**T**he resurrection was not only a designation of Christ in His full sonship but also a transfiguration of Christ from the flesh into the Spirit. In resurrection, Christ as the last Adam became the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45). In His birth Christ, as the embodiment of the Triune God, became a man in the flesh (John 1:1, 14). In His resurrection Christ became the Spirit. Thus, the Triune God, who passed through the processes of incarnation, human living, death, and resurrection, was consummated as the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:17). The Spirit today is the consummation of the processed Triune God with all the elements of Christ's divinity, humanity, death, and resurrection (John 7:39). He is the all-inclusive Spirit of the processed Triune God with all the riches of who Christ is and what He has obtained by His accomplishments.

### The Divine Trinity in Ascension

At the end of the Gospel of Matthew, the Lord Jesus met with His disciples in Galilee in order to commission them with the spreading of His kingdom. In 28:18 He said, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." All authority was given to Christ in His ascension when He was exalted to the right hand of God (Acts 2:33). There, God made Him both Lord and Christ (v. 36). As Lord, He is the Possessor of the entire universe, and as Christ, He is the One with all authority to reign over the entire universe, particularly the nations of the earth, for God's kingdom (Psa. 2:6-9). The power that operated in Christ to raise Him from the dead was also the power that seated Him at God's right hand in the heavenlies, the transcending power that raised Him above all rule and authority, and the power that subjected all things under His feet (Eph. 1:19-22).

Christ ascended to the heavens by the power of His divinity, the same power that raised Him from the dead. The Triune God, as the essence of Christ's divinity, not only rose from the dead in the humanity of Jesus but also ascended in that humanity to the highest position in the universe. This was the final stage of the divine move. The Divine Trinity began His direct move with the incarnation in order to be mingled with man, and completed this move by returning in man through death, resurrection, and ascension to the highest place in the universe.

### The Divine Trinity in Experience

In Matthew 28:19 the Lord charged the disciples, saying, "Go therefore and disciple all the nations, baptizing them

into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." In this charge He clearly revealed the Triune God. Although God is three in person, He is one in name. He is the Triune God—literally, the three-one God. As believers, we call on the name of the Lord, the one unique God, and we also call Him Father, Son, and Spirit.

When the apostle Peter carried out the Lord's commission on the day of Pentecost, he said to the people, "Be baptized upon the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 2:38). There was no question in Peter's mind that the name of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit was equal to the name of Jesus Christ. These are not two different names. The Lord Jesus who spoke to the disciples on the mountain in Galilee was the Triune God, who had been incarnated, lived a human life, died, resurrected, and ascended and who had now come to them as the processed and consummated Triune God. The name of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit refers to Jesus Christ, who is the embodiment of God and who is now the life-giving Spirit.

**B**ecause He is the Triune God, all those who are baptized into Christ are baptized into the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. The word *into* in Matthew 28:19 indicates an organic, spiritual, and mystical union with the Triune God. The one name for the Divine Trinity is the sum total of the Divine Being, equivalent to His person. He is the wonderful One, who includes the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, with both divinity and humanity, with human living, death, resurrection, and ascension. The word *baptize* means to immerse. To baptize someone into the name of the Triune God is to baptize him into all that the Triune God is. This makes him a person of the kingdom of the heavens. By being organically joined to and mingled with the processed Triune God, we may experience and enjoy His unsearchable riches to become the kingdom of God, the realm of God, where God is expressed in full.

by Jim Batten

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>See notes on Matthew 1:1-17 in the Recovery Version of the Bible.

<sup>2</sup>The word in Greek for *of* in the phrase *of the Holy Spirit* in Matthew 1:18 and 20 can be translated literally as "out of."

<sup>3</sup>See notes 13<sup>1</sup> and 21<sup>1</sup> in Revelation 21 and note 15<sup>1</sup> in Revelation 22 in the Recovery Version of the Bible.

### Works Cited

*Hymns*. Anaheim: Living Stream Ministry, 1980.

Lee, Witness. Footnotes. Recovery Version of the Bible. Anaheim: Living Stream Ministry, 2003.