The Trinity as Witnesses - Judgment

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The Trinity, an eternally existing community of equally-divine persons living in perfect harmony & love, defines the ideal community. The Trinity explains the basis for God's creation of plural persons & how He expects them to live in community. Otherwise, how would a single, lone Creator even have a concept of community among equals. Even if He had created angels of equal dignity, how does this Creator, who had never had to deal with anyone as an equal, teach them to live as equals?

The perfect interchange of knowledge & equal respect among three persons with differing functions defines the human-human relationships of equal dignity with differing functions, as in marriage/family & work & civil authority. The beauty of the unquantifiable love & devotion among the persons within the Trinity is ineffable. But we must attempt to imitate it, for He is our Creator. We understand a small sliver of it as we study the New Testament & see the relationship between Father, Son, & Holy Spirit. It is a perfect relationship of love, trust, communication, submission, harmony of interests, & division of labor. But it is also a legal relationship.

The Mosaic Law as to Witnesses

“One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established.” Deuteronomy 19:15.

Jesus condemned the people of His time for not believing Him & His witnesses.

“You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life. . . . But I know that you do not have the love of God within you.” Jn 5:39-42.

“Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you: Moses, on whom you have set your hope. For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?” Jn 5:45-7.

Why is it that two witnesses are adequate under biblical law to confirm a fact? Could it be that each member of the Trinity always have two other members who can confirm facts?

Jesus and His Witnesses

Jesus refers to His witnesses several times in the book written by John the Apostle. He uses those witnesses to get the people to see that they are blind to what is right & wrong & that they need to follow the Son in order to follow God the Father. If they refuse to see their need & think they are capable of lighting their own way, they will perish.

“The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. . . . John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, 'This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me.' ” John 1:7, 8. 15.

“And they came unto John, and said unto him, 'Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him.' 'Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, "I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him." ' ” John 3:26, 28.

Jesus has many witnesses as to His identity & that He is the One who will impose final judgment for eternity.

“If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true. There is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true. Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth.” John 5:31-33.

“But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me. And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape.” John 5:36-7.

Jesus laid several charges against the people to help them see their need.

They had not heard His voice;

They had not seen God's shape;

God's word was not abiding in them;

They did not believe the One whom God the Father sent;

They searched the scriptures & miss the most important message;

Even though Jesus could give life to them, they were suicidal in their intent to not come to Him;

They did not have the love of God in them.

Jesus had heard God’s voice (Mt. 3:17; 17:6),\* & Jesus had seen God’s shape because He had lived in eternity with His Father in the uninterrupted community of the Trinity. Jesus did not excuse man’s refusal to submit to the One sent by God the Father with: “Well, you’re all sinners, so what should I expect?” He judged them for their refusal, accusing them of not listening to God’s word, not believing in Christ as a prophet, interpreting the scriptures wrongly & missing the most important point, hating life, & not having the love of God.

As Walt Kelly wrote in his Pogo comic strip, “We have met the enemy & he is us.” The people claimed to know right from wrong, lawful from unlawful, a true prophet from a false prophet, but they had everything wrong. From their interpretation of scripture to their interpretation of what Jesus did, what he said, & who he was, they were wrong. Wrong to the point of denying life itself. Their fault was their refusal to accept Christ as God’s authority in the matter of interpreting the Sabbath law. Our subjective interpretations of reality are utterly fallible with respect to life, law, right & wrong, etc. The only trustworthy witness is the person of Christ. Jesus attempted to explain that to the people of His day, so they would turn to Him.

Jesus Christ was utterly trustworthy as His Own Witness

We can & must trust Christ for our way to salvation.

“Jesus answered, ‘Even if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going, but you do not know where I come from or where I am going. You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one. Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is true, for it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father who sent me. In your Law it is written that the testimony of two people is true. I am the one who bears witness about myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness about me.’ They said to him therefore, ‘Where is your Father?’ Jesus answered, ‘You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also.’ ” John 8:14-9.

“Jesus answered them, 'I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me.' ” John 10:25.

Even though Jesus' words are utterly trustworthy, He called on the people to give heed to the other witnesses that were reliable in His day. For the needs of our day, John affirms witnesses upon whom we can rely, in addition to the scriptures.

“This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.” I John 5:6-10.

“. . . from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood . . . .” Rev. 1:5

“‘The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation.” Rev. 3:14.

"For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse." Romans 1:20

In other words, the fact of the Trinity is not some hidden doctrine; it is what we should know about the God who created us & the world. We & the universe are created, & the angels are created beings. Therefore, to whom did God speak, communicate, & love, if He is not a Triune being? If He existed eternally & knew nothing about communication with another person, how could he create people who communicate with each other.

Ever wondered why Jesus didn't try to convince people of His identity, saying, "I'm God, don't you know?" Like God Himself, Jesus was never insecure about Himself, never in a hurry, never concerned about being accepted. He was only concerned about the fate of those who rejected Him. In fact, His test of a person's fate revolved around how they treated Him. He expected people to understand who He was, worthy of all worship & complete trust. And if they didn't give that, they revealed themselves as agents of Satan. Talk about confidence in yourself!

Therefore, ultimately, we have no excuse, for We become witnesses as we attest to the faithfulness of Christ as to life, law, reality, & God. But when we reject Christ, we become false witnesses, bringing God's judgment upon ourselves.

Our Witness

“And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.” John 15:27.

“Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking false testimony against Jesus that they might put him to death, . . . .” Mt. 26:59

“Then they said, ‘What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips.’ ” Lk 22:71.

Those who receive Christ also receive immeasurable free gifts that come through the Son.

To What do we witness?

“But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man’s trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. And the free gift is not like the result of that one man’s sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. For if, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.” Romans 5:15-19.

Christ is Witnessed as the Final Judge

Remember the John 5 passages & Christ explaining why people did not submit to Him? He was making extravagant claims of being the Final Judge of all humanity. At least, they would have been extravagant for any other human being to make.

"Then answered Jesus and said unto them, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation. I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true. There is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true. Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth. But I receive not testimony from man: but these things I say, that ye might be saved. He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light. But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me. And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not. Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life. I receive not honour from men. But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you. I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive. How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only? Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?' " John 5:19-47, KJV.

Christ expected people to know who He was, yet also pointed to the witnesses that indicated who He was, which is the ultimate Judge before Whom we will stand on that final day of judgment.

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. But what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience.” II Corinthians 5:10-11.

God expects us to imagine what it will be like to stand in the judgment & thereby decide what is right & wrong for us now. But why wait until the end? If we live daily in Christ, if we see Him as our Judge, the one who gave His life to cover our sins, how can we not see ourselves differently, judge ourselves more strictly because we feel safe under the supervision of the merciful Christ, yet retain a refreshed new view of our lives each day, keeping a loving relationship with our Judge?

\* “And lo a voice from heaven, saying, ‘This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’ ” Matthew 3:17. “While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, ‘This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.’ ” Matthew 17:6, KJV.