

The Trinity Delusion

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Matthew 28:19

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and disciple all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you.

Trinitarian Claim

Trinitarians claim that Matthew 28:19 is identifying the three persons of their Triune God. This claim is often made by making a further claim that the word "name" in the singular means that we are to understand these three are the one Triune God who has one name.

Matthew 28:19 is often used as a beginning tutorial verse to teach people the Trinity.

The Claim vs. The Facts

The Scriptural facts show us that Trinitarians are not only disregarding the immediate context, they are imagining their doctrine into the text.

The Problem with the Claim

1. Eisegetical Interpretation

The Trinitarian interpretation is simply reading Trinity doctrine into the text. First, the Trinitarian counts, "one, two, three," as he has been conditioned to do, and then tells himself that Matthew 28:19 is referring to the Trinity. Second, the Trinitarian must then suppose that this verse does not simply mean, "God, God's Son, and God's Holy Spirit." Rather, through a feat of some very peculiar mental gymnastics, he imagines that these three are the one God, and by an act of his own will, he decides for himself to label all three as the one God instead of simply recognizing that the one God is one of the aforementioned three. He must also assume, prior to interpreting this verse, that the Holy Spirit is a separate third person.

Whenever Trinitarians can count "one, two, three" they somehow imagine this amounts to their three in one God. Why they would think that all three together are to be identified as "God," when one of these three is already identifiable as "God," is a fascinating study in eisegesis and the peculiarities of the Trinitarian mindset. Non-Trinitarians also believe that a relational unity exists between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and so there is nothing unusual about mentioning these three. The issue is the nature of that unity and whether or not these three constitute **one** Triune God. You will note the passage does not refer to these three as "God." Trinitarians impose that preconceived idea into the passage. Trinitarians want to believe that if the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are mentioned together, this means we are talking about a three in one God in unity of being. However, if only the Father is God and Matthew had intended to illustrate the unity of purpose of God the Father, His Son, and

His Holy Spirit, he would need to mention them together. Having a relationship with God and having a unity of purpose with God does not thereby mean one is "God" by identity. Moreover, in the immediately preceding context of this passage, the Son of God declares he has been given all authority in heaven and earth, an obvious reference to the Father handing authority over to the Son. And the Father is already Lord of heaven and earth and does not have to be given any authority since He is already above all since we he is "God" (Matthew 11:25; Luke 10:21). Jesus was given this authority upon his resurrection and this is precisely what it means for him to have ascended to the right hand of the throne of God (see also Acts 2:36).

2. Two Persons + Holy Spirit = 3 Persons?

Trinitarians must assume that three distinct persons are being mentioned here. The plainest reading of the verse tells us that people are to be baptized in the name of: (1) God the Father, (2) God's Son, and (3) God's Spirit. There is no reason here to suppose we are to identify all three as God when God is one of the aforementioned three and God's Son and God's Spirit are mentioned along with God. The Scriptural facts also show us that we cannot presume the Holy Spirit is a separate and distinct third person simply because two persons are mentioned along with the Holy Spirit. The following passage makes this quite clear:

1 John 5:8: For there are three that testify: the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.

Three persons? Trinitarians know the Spirit in this verse is their Third Person of the Trinity. Must we then assume that the water and blood are each a person too? Or conversely, should we assume the Spirit is **not a person** because the Spirit is mentioned with two other things which are not persons? It is rather obvious here that one cannot insist the Holy Spirit in Matthew 28:19 is a separate third person because the Spirit is mentioned with two other persons. This Trinitarian claim doesn't hold water as the Bible demonstrates.

Trinitarian hypocrisy concerning this claim is also illustrated when we compare this claim with their claims at Genesis 18-19. In Genesis 18, the account identifies three men. It not only sums them up to three in total but the account also tells us that all three are "men" and two of these three men leave the other one behind, go to Sodom, and are identified as angels in the next chapter. Yet Trinitarians deny these are three angels and isn't the third is not an angel even though they were identified as "three men." Matthew 28:19 doesn't sum up anything for the reader nor tell us whether any of them are persons. Nevertheless, we are expected to believe the Holy Spirit is a person because the Father and Son are obviously persons. Why then do these same Trinitarians deny that all three men are angels at Genesis 18 since the other two are angels, especially when the account identifies them all in one category as "three men?" There is even more reason here to believe all three men are three angels than to believe the three at Matthew 28:19 are three persons. But they don't seem to care about truthful consistency and deny their own argument at Genesis 18. Hypocrisy.

3. Questionable Authenticity

A certain irregularity occurs in this particular passage. Here Jesus has just declared "all authority has been given to ME." But he then goes on to say, "Go, therefore and make

disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit." One would expect him to say "... all authority has been given to me. Go, therefore, and baptize in my name." Furthermore, we find in the book of Acts that this is precisely just what the disciples ended up doing: baptizing in Jesus' name. We find absolutely nobody baptizing in the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the Bible. Even further, Jesus goes on to say in this passage, "teaching them to observe all the things I commanded you..." The instruction to keep "all I have commanded" again reflects back on the fact that all authority had been given to "me." He is the authority commanding the disciples to keep his teaching and to teach others to keep his teaching. The phrase "baptizing them in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" seems very out of place within the context

- All authority is give to **ONE** (Jesus)
- Baptize in the name of **THREE** (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)
- Teach them to observe all the **ONE** has commanded (Jesus)

This make the authenticity of the verse suspicious even on the fact of it.

And even further yet, we find this statement in Luke that Jesus makes after he rises from the dead.

Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. (Luke 24:47).

Here we have a very similar concept. Notice the reference to all nations here in Luke just as we find at Matthew 28:18. And on the Day of Pentecost we find the following:

Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that **God has made this Jesus both Lord** and Christ whom you crucified." Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you **be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ** for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:36-38).

Notice that the concept here in Acts of God making Jesus "Lord" in his resurrection is the same concept as Jesus words in Matthew, "all authority... has been given to me" at Matthew 28:18. And here we find Peter instructing these men to be baptized **in the name of Jesus Christ**. So we find in Acts that all authority has been given to Jesus and so Peter concludes one should be baptized in the name of Jesus.

And there is yet one more consideration. It is a well known fact that the ending of Mark is highly questionable. In fact, manuscripts have three completely different endings for the book of Mark. And here we are in a similar situation at the end of Matthew. Matthew and Mark are very similar books. Did somebody intentionally corrupt the endings of both Matthew and Mark?

Jesus said, "Go, therefore." The word "therefore" refers back to the fact he had been given all authority. It seems out of context for Jesus to say the reason they should baptize in the

name of three because he, one person, had been given this authority. And when we look at the Scriptural fact that nobody baptizes in this manner but they did baptize "in the name of Jesus." It then certainly appears the reasons for questioning the authenticity of this verse is well founded.

4. How Eusebius Quoted this Passage

Now one might be quick to dismiss this irregularity but there is even more evidence that this verse might be a corruption. Eusebius, a very important church historian of the early fourth century, appears to have quoted this passage in a form that does not say "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit:"

"But the rest of the apostles, who had been incessantly plotted against with a view to their destruction, and had been driven out of the land of Judea, went unto all nations to preach the Gospel, relying upon the power of Christ, who had said to them, "Go ye and make disciples of all the nations in my name." (History, Book III, IV, 2).

And he does it again in another work:

What king or prince in any age of the world, what philosopher, legislator or prophet, in civilized or barbarous lands, has attained so great a height of excellence, I say not after death, but while living still, and full of mighty power, as to fill the ears and tongues of all mankind with the praises of his name? Surely none save our only Savior has done this, when, after his victory over death, he spoke the word to his followers, and fulfilled it by the event, saying to them, "Go ye and make disciples of all nations in my name." (Oration in Praise of Emperor Constantine 16, 8).

In fact, Eusebius refers to this passage well over a dozen times in the same form as the above quotations. Now you must also be aware that this quotation by Eusebius is also earlier than our earliest manuscripts for this verse. Hence, it is quite possible that a corruption may have originated here during the Nicean Controversy. The following quotation is particularly interesting:

For he did not enjoin them "to make disciples of all the nations" simply and without qualification, but with the essential addition "in his name". For so great was the virtue attaching to his appellation that the Apostle says, "God bestowed on him the name above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee shall bow of things in heaven and on earth and under the earth." It was right therefore that he should emphasize the virtue of the power residing in his name but hidden from the many, and therefore say to his Apostles, "Go ye, and make disciples of all the nations in my name." (Demonstratio Evangelica, col. 240, p. 136)

Obviously, the manuscript of Matthew being used by Eusebius was different than the words we find in today's Bibles. Eusebius is not the only one to provide us with clues concerning this issue:

"In Origen's works, as preserved in the Greek, the first part of the verse is cited three times, but his citation always stops short at the words 'the nations'; and that in itself

suggests that his text has been censored, and the words which followed, 'in my name', struck out." – Conybeare

And even more interesting quotation comes from Clement of Alexandria who is citing a Gnostic and not the canonical text:

And to the Apostles he gives the command: Going around preach ye and baptize those who believe in the name of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit.'" - Excerta cap. 76, ed. Sylb. page 287, quote from Conybeare.

Therefore, there is weighty evidence that this verse may have been corrupted. These facts are presented here so that you may discern whether a corruption may have taken place.

However, early manuscripts such as Sinaiticus and Vaticanus do read "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit," and the Didache refers to baptism in this manner, Justin Martyr seems to allude to the same idea, and Irenaeus, Tertullian, Hippolytus, and Cyprian quote the verse as "in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." Yet again, there may have been two versions of this verse floating around in the early church.

Therefore, it would be useful to ask ourselves whether or not this passage would indeed lend any support to the doctrine of the Trinity even if it is authentic. While it is very possible that this verse is a corruption, there is enough evidence to indicate the "Father, Son, Holy Spirit," reading might be authentic.

5. The Greek word for "name" is singular not plural

The Greek word for "name" in this passage is singular and not plural. It does not say, "into the names of," but "into the name of." Because it is singular, the Trinitarian argues that it must refer to one. This is absolutely correct. However they also claim that because three persons follow, it also therefore follows that the one thing to which this word refers is one *identity* which is therefore the one Trinity of three persons, that is, one "God." This is totally incorrect.

Here Jesus commands his disciples to baptize "in the name of." In the ancient Jewish world, to do something in someone's name meant to do something under another person's authority, character, reputation, plan and purpose. It implies the idea that a subject of that authority is doing the authority's will for that authority. For example, the phrase "Stop in the name of the Monarchy" does not refer to the King's personal name, his surname nor the King and Queen's personal or surnames together. It refers to the plan and purpose and law of the Monarchy as established by their authority. And now we shall see this is exactly how the term is used at Matthew 28:19. In verse 18, Jesus declares, "all authority in heaven and earth is given to me." He then says, "therefore go." It is a basic tenet of hermeneutics that when one sees the word "**therefore**" one asks what the word "therefore" is there for. Jesus is expressing a cause and effect statement. Because he has been given all authority, the disciples are therefore to go out and baptize all nations "in the name of." This language refers back to the authority Jesus had been given.

It really isn't difficult to demonstrate that Trinitarians are in error concerning their claim

concerning the reason "name" is singular. For example:

τὸ ὄνομα τῶν πατέρων μου Ἀβραὰμ καὶ Ἰσαακ
the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac (Genesis 48:16)

Notice that "name" is not singular because Abraham and Isaac are the same one identity. It is singular to denote the same one reputation and character of Abraham and Isaac. Notice also the following verse:

For whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the son of man will be ashamed of him when he comes in the glory of him and of the Father and of the holy angels.

Is the word "glory" in singular form because the Son, the Father, and the holy angels are one being, one identity, or one God? Such a claim would be ridiculous. Yet it does not stop Trinitarians from making such a claim at Matthew 28:19 when we have the same kind of grammar.

Analysis of the Facts

1. The Flow of the Immediate Context

Let us carefully and honestly regard the flow of the immediate context. Jesus first says all authority is given to "**me**." He then says to go and baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Why would he indicate all authority has been give to "me" but then say, "Therefore" go and baptize in the name of three? Honestly regard this singularity. If the Trinitarian mindset and flow of thought really made any sense, it should follow that since all authority had been given to *Jesus* then the disciples should baptize in the name of *Jesus* and be careful to observe everything *Jesus* had commanded them and that *Jesus* would be with them to the end of the age. But this is **not** what it says. The question is "why?"

2. Baptism Confusion

Trinitarians are often very confused by the fact that here the disciples are commanded to baptize in the name of "the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit," but when these Trinitarians come to the book of Acts, they see that every single occurrence of baptism shows the disciples baptized "in the name of Jesus." The very fact that Trinitarians are confused about this situation betrays their complete lack of understanding and their corresponding misinterpretation of this passage, not to mention the significance of the resurrection of Jesus with respect to his authority. Trinitarians often suppose Jesus is giving his apostles a "baptism formula," that is he is telling them what to say when they baptized people. But if we understand Jesus properly, the reader of the Bible is left completely without any such confusion when he comes to those passages in Acts which describe people being baptized "in the name of Jesus." In fact, Peter tells us that there is no other name by which we can be saved but the name of Jesus. And indeed, Jesus said all authority had been given to him so one would expect that baptism would be into his name if by the word "name" he meant what you were supposed to say when you baptized someone. But that is not what he meant. Jesus was not giving the disciples some words to say when they

baptized.

What Jesus was saying in Matthew 28:18 is that the Father has given him, the Son, all authority. We must ask how that occurred. This authority is administered by the Holy Spirit in the disciples who baptize all nations. The reason Father, Son, are mentioned together here is because we have just been told all authority has been given by the Father to the Son. The reason Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are mentioned altogether is because this authority given to Jesus is administered by his servants via the Holy Spirit. There is absolutely no reason to suppose we have a three person God on our hands.

So when we come to the book of Acts and see them baptize in the name of Jesus we should not see this as contradicting Jesus' instructions in Matthew. Baptizing them in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit was not something they were supposed to say out loud when they were baptizing. Jesus was explaining on what terms they would be doing this baptizing. Since Jesus had been given all authority he would now send out these disciples in HIS name because HE had been given that authority by the Father. And Jesus sent them out by filling them with the Holy Spirit (John 20:22).

Conclusion

To try and claim this passage indicates that that all men should be baptized into a three person God ignores the facts for the sake of personal imaginations. Counting, "one, two, three" amounts to three not a three in one God. To insist that "name" here is a proper name of the "Father, Son and Holy Spirit" is an hermeneutic violation of the immediate context ignoring the fact that all (singular) authority had been given to Jesus alone. This occurred when God raised him from the dead and seated him at His right hand. The one thing which the singular "name" is pertaining to, is not the identity of a Triune God, but the **one authority** of God the Father through God's Son in God's Holy Spirit. The disciples are to do these things in the name of the authority of the Father, given to the Son, by the Holy Spirit. And this is why Jesus commanded his disciples to do nothing until they had received the Holy Spirit from on High (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-5,8; 2:33,36). The interpretation presented here is demanded not only by the ancient concept of a "name" but the force of the immediate context and the consistent testimony of the Scriptures. As such, the word "name" is not a reference to one identity, but to one plan and purpose of authority.

The Trinitarian interpretation essentially ignores the context for the sake of reading their doctrine into the text. There is absolutely no reason to resort to mental gymnastics and identify all three as God since God is one of the aforementioned three.

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