

The Trinity of God

Part 1

Speaker	Ernest Brown
Duration	00:45:30
Online version	https://www.audioteaching.org/en/sermons/eb019/the-trinity-of-god

Note: This text is a computer generated transcript of the sermon. In some cases it may contain errors.

[00:00:00] Matthew's Gospel, chapter 28, verse 16 Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them.

And when they saw him, they worshipped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. [00:01:04] And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Now perhaps we might sing the other three verses of that opening hymn, 401. I was asked a good question today.

How early do I know the scripture or the subject that I'm going to speak about?

Those of you who serve the Lord by speaking to other people about him, no doubt have the same experience. [00:02:04] Sometimes, well in advance of the occasion, when words are needed, you get a clear impression about what you need to be reading and speaking about. Other times, you're almost or perhaps even on the platform at the desk before you realize what you have to say. Hopefully, it never gets to the point where you've actually got down before you realize what you should have been talking about. I had an inclination, fed by the expression of a general need in many parts, that we should pay increasing attention to what we do when we are together and why we do it.

[00:03:01] In other words, does scripture justify the way we meet, the basis on which we meet, what governs our activities while we are together? And I was meditating along those lines until I got a clear impression that that would be starting at the wrong end. If the Lord will, starting at what I judge to be the proper end, if the Lord hasn't come and when the dust settles after this visit, if he'd like me to come again, I'd be glad to do so at any mutually convenient date. But tonight, I feel it right to start at the proper end, God's end. And if you want a heading for what I want to talk about, I suppose you could say, I want to make a beginning in addressing the subject of Christianity proper. [00:04:09] Or another way, the fullness of the Christian revelation.

I read from Matthew 28, and to those of you who search the scriptures daily, you will have already been mulling over in your mind that Matthew's gospel has a Jewish flavour. It has a dispensational flavour, and you might think, well, we don't quite get Christian teaching in its fullness in the gospel by Matthew. Amen to that, I fully agree. But it seems to me significant that even in this particular gospel,

which is enlightening the Jews as to the fact that the promised Messiah has come, [00:05:03] that he would be rejected, having presented himself to the nation, he would be refused, set it not, he would ultimately be crucified, and he would be raised again from among the dead, and at the end, in this commission that is given to the disciples at the end of the gospel, they are told to go out baptising from all the nations, and this is the character of the truth to which they have to baptise those that they baptise. So I just want to take this little phrase, this almost a formula if you like, Go therefore, verse 19, teach all nations, baptising them, we have to be careful as to our prepositions, if you consider all your concordances, [00:06:03] and Greek New Testaments, and all these aids you have at your disposal, you'll probably find that the commission is to go teaching, baptising, unto the name, unto the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Now what does that mean? I know this with care, another subject that suggested itself to mine was the subject of baptism, another very important subject.

I don't know why brethren get so upset at the very idea of even considering the subject of baptism, why there's so much heat and so little light about the subject of baptism. It's not my subject this week, but here I think it's significant. In introducing the subject of baptism in Matthew's Gospel, [00:07:03] it's with a view to being brought within the scope of the fullness of the Christian revelation, and the fullness of the Christian revelation is the revelation of divine persons, the fullness of the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Now take that away, meditate upon it, I only want to pick that out of Matthew's Gospel, that if we are to consider the fullness of the Christian revelation, you and I, simple believers on the Lord Jesus, have been brought into the understanding and apprehension, we'll come back to these words, something that has never been revealed in its fullness before. Until Christ came, until he died and rose again, [00:08:03] until he ascended where he was before and sent the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, it was not possible to be brought within the scope of the Christian revelation, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Christianity is a fuller, deeper, wider, better revelation of God than there could ever possibly have been before.

And we get just an inkling of this, in the scope of this baptismal formula, unto the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. If you ever read it again, baptism is not the subject. In the book of Acts, for instance, there are those who are baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. No difficulty.

[00:09:01] We are brought under the authority of the Lord. We recognise the authority under which we are placed, baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus, unto the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Now, would you quickly turn on, please? We must keep moving. 2nd Timothy, chapter 1.

At the listening end, I've always found general comments like this helpful to me. I hope they're helpful to some of you. 2nd Timothy, chapter 1, and verse 9.

Who, that is, from the previous verse, God. God hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, [00:10:05] which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began. Another very full verse.

Notice the order.

He starts off, God has saved us.

He's starting at our end, and he talks about the blessing that is ours. He's looking at it from the side of our need. Now, this is the way we enter into the truth of God. When we first trust the Savior, we are not concerned, we are not aware about things like the counsel of God, or even the kingdom of God, or even the church of God. [00:11:02] What we are concerned about is our sins, and getting saved. And that's right.

So that's settled. Nothing else can be sorted out. And he starts at the end of our needs. He says, God has saved us.

And then, wonder of wonders, we find that we are ushered into a sphere of blessing that until we are saved, we have no idea about at all. So he goes on, and he says, God has saved us, and called us with a holy calling.

Or, when we trust Jesus as our Savior, we are ushered into a wealth of blessing that until we are saved, and indwelt by the Spirit, we haven't the capacity to understand. We can know nothing about it. But we move on from our needs and blessings, [00:12:01] and we are brought into the wonder of the calling of God. There's something much more deeper about the call of God than merely singling us out, drawing us out from our hiding place, and our believing the gospel. When we get the term call, or calling in scripture, it tells us that God has conferred upon us a dignity. He has called us into relationship with himself. Now, see the movement from being saved, and attending to our needs, and being drawn on to a realization of all that God has in mind for us, because we have been made right with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, that's one way.

And then he pauses and says, [00:13:01] not according to our works, never could be, but, and then he says something marvelous, but according to his own purpose and grace.

Now, I want to suggest to you now that he's turned the thinking process round. Once we are in the family, once we are in relationship with God, he can then draw the veil aside, and help us to understand things we would never have dreamed of before. And so he then says, right, I've drawn you in from your side on to my side, and he says, I want to tell you that really what happened was that I started moving first, God says to it, and then eventually you were brought within the compass of the blessing that God has brought from himself. [00:14:03] And so he begins here, he takes it the other way round, he says, according to his own purpose.

Maybe a fad of mine.

I don't get too upset when brethren talk about the purposes of God. But when you read scripture, you'll find it's always spoken of in the singular, the purpose of God.

God has a singular purpose.

We'll find out something about it, I trust, as the week progresses. But notice that God has a purpose.

The purpose.

His purpose.

Start somewhere round about Proverbs 15, and go through your concordance, and check every

reference to the purpose of God, [00:15:03] and you'll satisfy your mind that in the purpose of God, our attention is drawn to that which God has ever had in mind. In other words, we're not now starting as the verse started, with things from our end meeting our need, we are now starting from God's side, and we are introduced into this majestic consideration of the purpose of God.

As I say, go back to Proverbs 15, work your way right through scripture, and you'll find that the purpose of God, spoken of in the singular, tells us that God has ever had something dear to his heart, ever in his own mind, and this has been progressively revealed, stage by stage.

Having said that, he then says his own purpose and grace. [00:16:03] Now, if we on our side of our needs were to be drawn into this wonderful sphere of blessing, it could never be by any works of righteousness that we could do, it can only be by the grace of God.

God's goodness towards us, this free unmerited favor, hammer home in our minds that however long we live, however faithful we might mature to be, we could never deserve blessing of any sort by what we do.

Blessing is always a result of the grace of God. And so he takes account of this, if his purpose, which he has ever purposed, was to be brought to pass, and we were to be brought within the scope of it, it could only be by the free grace of God.

[00:17:04] And he says this is so far reaching that if you want to begin where God begins, you have to begin before the world began.

Another interesting study is wherever the blessing of the church of the living God in association with our Lord Jesus Christ is referred to in scripture, it is always referred as having its beginning before the world began, or before the foundation of the world. If we get a phrase like from the beginning of the world, or from the foundation of the world, we'll find I'm sure that it refers usually to the blessing of the nation of Israel and not the blessing of the church of Christ. [00:18:04] Well, here we have it. At the beginning of the verse, we have salvation and calling, our need, and then that which is conferred upon us afterwards. End of the verse, speaking from God's side, purpose, and then grace.

Now what's the distinction that needs to be drawn? Something to look for in scripture always. There are two major streams in the teaching of scripture. One is from God's side coming down towards us, and that is the stream of revelation. There is another stream in scripture which starts with the meeting of our need and being drawn up to a realization of what God has done. Now that line is the line of apprehension. [00:19:03] So we need these two streams. Scriptures don't always take things in the same way, and it's worth noticing that sometimes it's on the revelation of God from himself and down to meeting our need, and then we are drawn up on the line of apprehension and we are brought to a proper understanding of what God has ever had in mind.

Now that's all I want to take about, take out of 2 Timothy 1 verse 9, this distinction between revelation and apprehension. We look at another scripture, 1 John 1.

As you're finding that, I will only add that if one good comparison is between revelation and apprehension, another good distinction [00:20:02] is between revelation and response. Now it's when God reveals himself, tells us about himself, and gives us an apprehension of himself that it's then that the response begins to flow. Or you might say, well, I felt a response in my spirit as soon as I trusted

Christ as Savior, and rightly so.

But perhaps the first revelation that God gave us of himself was as a Savior God, and that in itself brought about a response of thanksgiving, something which we will never lose. So put these things together, revelation down from God to us, apprehension, our moving upwards and inwards and a sense of the goodness of God and that bringing about the response. [00:21:01] Now 1 John 1 verse 1.

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have handled of the word of life for the life was manifested and we have seen it and bear witness and show unto you that eternal life which was with the father and was manifested unto us. That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you that ye also may have fellowship with us and truly our fellowship is with the father and with his son, Jesus Christ and these things rightly unto you that your joy may be whole. I was talking with a friend in his home a couple of years ago. [00:22:02] He didn't have his Bible at hand. I was sitting with mine and talking about these verses. He said, let me see your Bible. I passed it to him. He said, let me see your Bible. He said, let me see your Bible. I passed it to him. He said, let me see your Bible. I passed it to him. He looked at it and he winced and handed it back. He said, I can't read it. It's all scribbles. Is your Bible all scribbles? Might be scribbles to other people, mightn't it? But they're treasures when they're your scribbles, aren't they? I trust this is not scribbled. It's too precious a document to scribble on. But I did one day go right through noticing the words that are significant, noticing, for instance, that the word love comes in 51 times, the word no 40 times, [00:23:02] abide 23, life 17, truth 15, manifest or manifested 10, and so on. It's not a bad thing, you know, to get the feel of a teaching of a book of the Bible by noticing the key words, the words that are repeated, the things that run like threads and give you an understanding of what the writer is about. Well, certainly, like the gospel, where, for instance, the first seven chapters are all about life and chapters 8 to 12 are all about light and then verse chapter 13 onwards is all about love. In John's epistle, we get these same themes [00:24:01] like a reinforced mesh going right through life and light and love.

Matthew 28, the scope of the Christian revelation Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

John's epistle, you say, Oh, now I know why he wrote it.

Verse 4 says, These things write we unto you that your joy may be full. Go through the epistle, you'll find he gives not just one or two, he gives 11 reasons why he wrote it.

He had good cause to write it. He says, These things write we unto you and then he gives a reason and another and another. The first one he gives is that your joy may be full.

Now again, God wants us [00:25:02] to be happy Christians. He wants us to be full of joy. And the way he encourages us to be full of joy is to enter into an understanding of the fullness of the Christian revelation. It is not a merely academic, intellectual matter to study the detail of Scripture to see what God is teaching us in the various books of the Bible. And here, in verse 3 he says, Now this is all about. Christianity is about fellowship. Fellowship with one another is a great matter. But higher and fuller than what we enjoy with each other, we are drawn into this wonderful fellowship with the Father and with the Son. And if the Lord will, we'll hope to come to something of that. [00:26:01] But I'm still on this matter of revelation and apprehension and that's why I've read the verses at this stage. Notice in verse 1, That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen. Faith cometh by hearing.

Hearing by the word of God. This is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you. Our first knowledge is being acquainted with the gospel. I know that we may well have the first contact with the gospel through the eyes reading Scripture. We may well have it spoken in our hearing. But this word hearing, [00:27:02] and again we borrow from Romans, faith cometh by hearing, it's being made aware of our need, God's desire to bless us, and trusting God that the way that he provides is the only way into blessing. Now, this is summed up relative to the sense of hearing. Being made to understand the truth of God, first as to our sinfulness, as to our need of salvation, and that by trusting Christ we can receive that salvation. Now, this is attributed to the sense of hearing, and it would include, I'm sure, reading the word of God. But then he says, having heard, having believed, you see, [00:28:02] you perceive, you understand things that you could never have done in your unconverted days. And he attributes this to the sense of sight. He said, first we heard, we believed, and then we were brought, we were given eyes to see things that we could never have seen before. Now again, you're a step ahead of me, aren't you? You're saying, oh yes, this is the line of apprehension. And so it is, beginning with our need, how our resistance is broken down, and we are drawn on to trust the Savior. And then, having heard, we are brought within the scope of the revelation which we have seen. But now, having entered into that, again it's turned around.

Once we begin to learn a little bit about it, verse three says, now we, [00:29:01] not we Christians, we apostles here, that special apostolic band who are given the privilege and responsibility of taking their place in the early days of the Christian church announcing the glad tidings. And he says, now, he said, having been drawn into it, having had our responsibilities met, he says, we now are able to tackle things because we are beginning to see things from God's side. And so he turns it around very neatly and he says, that which we have seen and heard, having been brought into the apprehension of it, he says, it's a wonderful thing that we are now in an understanding of the revelation of God, what God has shown us of himself and from himself in the person of Christ [00:30:02] and this is what fire them in their service for the Lord.

So heard and seen apprehension, seen and heard revelation.

Revelation chapter 22.

Verse 13.

I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

The Lord Jesus speaking.

But even if we hadn't noticed that, let us consider this threefold statement.

[00:31:02] Good thing to check right through the book of Revelation. Half a dozen times or more, we get one, two, or three of these phrases put together.

Not always in the same order, but here Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Now I want to make a suggestion about this to take away and meditate.

There'll not be much more than just to mention it.

Alpha and Omega, even with my limited education, I am aware that Alpha and Omega are the first

and last letters of the Greek alphabet, the language in which the New Testament was originally written.

It's about language.

[00:32:04] It's about speaking.

It's about communication.

And this verse tells me that the Lord Jesus, my Savior, he is the sum and substance of all that God has to say.

Marvelous thing.

If there is a Christian revelation, if I'm to be drawn in to an understanding of who God is and what God is and what he's about, it can only be through the revelation that God has given of himself in Christ, the sum and substance of all that God has to say.

[00:33:03] The beginning and the end, not now a matter of speaking, more a matter of doing.

Or John's Gospel says, if I paraphrase it in words that are consistent with this thought, it's John's Gospel that tells us that everything that had a beginning owes its beginning to him who was in the beginning, which you can take as a paraphrase of the opening statement of John's Gospel. First Corinthians 15, we read, then come at the end.

Lovely thought to me.

If the first recorded act in time was an act of insubjection by Adam and Eve, [00:34:02] the last event in time will be an act of perfect subjection and submission.

When the Son as such hands over the kingdom to the Father as such, that God as such might be all in all.

Not only is the Lord Jesus the sum and substance of all that God has to say, the Lord Jesus is also the sum and the substance of everything that was worthwhile that God has done, is doing and will ever do. He is the beginning and the end.

If Alpha and Omega is about language and speaking, if the beginning and the end is about doing and acting, [00:35:02] the first and the last is about being.

Not just existence, but being, which I think is a fuller word.

All your thoughts have moved on, I'm sure. The Lord Jesus is not only the sum and substance of all that God has to say and all that God has to do, he is the sum and substance of the being of God because he is God.

Tremendous things, aren't they? Bound up in these three little phrases, Alpha and Omega, beginning and end, the first and the last. Now, just briefly, and perhaps there is time, we'll demonstrate this from

Scripture. Would you turn, please, to Hebrews chapter 1.

[00:36:01] In each case, bear in mind that we are concerned with how the revelation of God has come to us, how God has revealed himself, manifested himself to man, and how we are brought into an understanding of it and brought into the enjoyment of it. And the immediate proposition is only in the person of Christ. Hebrews 1, verse 1.

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds, who, being the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, [00:37:02] when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high, being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

God has spoken.

Previously, recorded in the Old Testament, summarized, I suppose, in the first two and a half chapters of Romans, God has, stage by stage, progressively made known himself in a fuller and deeper way. First of all partially, then a little more and a little more, but only in the person of the Son [00:38:04] can God make himself fully known.

He's told the story progressively.

He has spoken more and more fully every stage of the declaration of who he is.

But it says here, having spoken at sundry times divers manners unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by or in his Son.

There are three major treatises, there are three major dissertations, three major statements about the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, the personal glory of the Lord Jesus. As we come to them, John 1, Colossians 1, Hebrews 1.

My suggestion tonight [00:39:01] is that each has its own emphasis.

Without repeating what's been said already, I would say that Hebrews 1 is about the speaking of God.

Oh yes, you get seven of his titles, if you like, seven expressions of the way that he's shown his glory in verses 2 and 3. We get this statement about his more excellent name in verse 4. But the heart of the statement is taking the first verse of verse 1 and the first phrase of verse 2. God has spoken.

We can know about God now because God has spoken.

Previous to the incoming into the world of the Son of God, people knew something about God. He had said something about himself. [00:40:02] But only with the incoming into the world of God the Son could God be fully declared to be what he is, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And so here, I would suggest that the epistle to the Hebrews, in particular these first four verses, are an expansion of what is involved in saying that the Lord Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, the sum and the substance of

all that God has to say. Colossians 1, another of these three delightful chapters.

We shall read only verses 12 and 13.

[00:41:04] Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, who hath delivered us from the power of darkness and hath translated us unto the kingdom of his dear Son, we might say, hath translated us unto the kingdom of the Son of the Father's love.

Another major revelation of the personal glory of the Lord Jesus.

I suppose, while John and Paul have their distinctive lines, here is one where their lines merge or coalesce.

The only begotten, the only begotten Son in John's writings, [00:42:01] I would say, is as close as you can get to what Paul says here, the Son of the Father's love. Nice to see, while they have distinctive flavors to their ministry, they agree on important matters like this. Now what follows is a list of the things that have been done by the one who announces himself in Revelation 22 as the beginning and the end.

Now the phrase, the beginning, even comes in this chapter, verse 18. Who is the beginning?

Oh, but it's full of his offices.

He's the redeemer. He's the creator. He's the sustainer.

He is the beginning. He is the reconciler. All these things he does [00:43:03] and it's in the doing of them that he is revealing the fact that he is the beginning and the end of all that God has to do.

If God has anything to say, the fullness of that saying is in the person and through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. If God has anything to do, it is in the person and through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. I leave that for your further meditation and go back to John, Gospel chapter 1.

I read the verses then make a brief comment.

I'll read straight through as they need to be read, verses 1, 14, and 18.

In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God [00:44:01] and the word was made flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

No man has seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

If Hebrews 1 is about speaking, when the Lord Jesus speaks, it's God speaking because he is God.

When the Lord Jesus is acting, it is God's acting because he is God.

And here, when we get, it's all about the expression of the being of God, Christ himself, the Son, [00:45:02] can express who and what God is because he is God.

Not only the Alpha and Omega, not only also the beginning and the end, he is also the first and the last.

I was browsing this morning through a very, very worthwhile treatise on the verbs that are used in the beginning of John's Gospel by a very good friend of mine, now with the Lord, who spent his later years in Otley.

Lovely book. If you haven't got it, get it. If you have got it, read it. And if you have read it, read it again. The Heart of Christianity.

And attention is drawn then to the fact that some things are said to have being [00:46:01] in the sense that they've always had being. They never began to be.

Scripture is careful to God in case we are deluded into thinking that the Father began to be then, or the Son began to be then, or the Spirit began to be.

They had existence. They had being in eternity. How could God have an eternal purpose unless there was a God to have that purpose? And John's Gospel concentrates on the fact that everything that came into being, that's the other verb, everything that came into being had a commencement of existence. In other words, all created things, they all came into being as a result of the work of one who had eternal being.

[00:47:01] All things were made by him and without him was not anything made that was made. Wonderful thing.

One more thing before we close. This matter of first and last.

The language that's used in John's Gospel is extremely wide and edifying.

What it says about the Lord Jesus and it's relative, relevant to this matter of being first and last is this.

The Lord Jesus Christ turned here in John's Gospel the word and that word, that term, means expression of what is there and taking it the first stage we can say that the Lord Jesus [00:48:03] is the only one competent to express God because he is God. Now these are good phrases, they are worth meditating upon. But it's even fuller than that. Not only does he express God, he is himself the expression of what he is expressing. In other words, he is the personal embodiment, we might say, he is the epitome of expression of the being of God.

We don't get hold of these things in five minutes, do we? Starting with that wonderful to us expression, God has saved us.

Little by little, we are brought into an understanding of the truth of God. And wonder of wonders, very early in our Christian meditations of the word of God [00:49:02] being indwelt by the Spirit, we can distinguish such things as God speaking, God doing, and God being.

And these phrases, Alpha and Omega, beginning and end, first and last, exemplified, I suggest, in Hebrews 1, Colossians 1, and John 1, give us a little bit of understanding, help us along the way in our apprehension, and then we find that it draws us up into the revelation of God as he really is, in the fullness revelation of himself, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We cannot look at all these things in one meditation, can we? We'll have to leave it there. I trust we'll all pray about it, and then if the Lord will, we'll come together again tomorrow evening. But let us now, for the moment, sing our closing hymn, [00:50:01] number 485.

Amen.