

What We Believe Pt. 3

Pastor James Foley – Sunday, July 29, 2018

Main Theme – Considering the Sixteen Fundamental Truths of the Assemblies of God – “Part 3”

WORSHIP & PRAYER

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Upcoming Events (REGULAR)**
 - Potluck Supper – Taking Place TODAY After Service
 - Ministry Sabbatical – WM, MM & CYC on Break in August
 - Sunday & Thursday Ministries UNAFFECTED by the Sabbatical
 - Week of Prayer & Fasting – August 6–10 (NOP Aug. 9) [Sign-Up]

MORNING OFFERING

At this time, I want to call forth our ushers.

-Thank you for your faithfulness in giving to the Lord/His work

-Your giving fuels the work of Christ in and through this church

May the Lord bless you as you give! May you experience His faithfulness in kind!

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- **CHILDREN DISMISSED FOR CHILDREN’S CHURCH**
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INTRODUCTIONS

As always, it is wonderful to see you. I look forward to these weekly moments of worship and instruction. I pray that you are ready to receive what God has for you today! Have a Bible ready.

SETTING THE STAGE PT. 1

For those who have not been here—and as a reminder/reaffirmation for those who have been present—we are in the midst of an EXTENDED SERIES on the fundamentals of our faith. i.e., We are identifying and discussing the Sixteen Fundamental Truths of the Assemblies of God. As I have noted time and again...

...If we are to CONTEND FOR THE FAITH (i.e., defending and properly communicating the body of Christian teaching)—as the Book of Jude commands—we must know what it is we believe. We will only be able to effectively share the truths of the Word if we know and understand those truths first. You cannot give out what you do not possess!

SETTING THE STAGE PT. 2

Last Sunday morning we addressed the 1st Fundamental Truth of the Assemblies of God (**SLIDE**):

We believe that the Bible is inspired by God and declares His design and plan for mankind. It is the revelation of God to man, the infallible, inerrant and authoritative rule of faith and conduct.

Let's take a moment to RECAP a bit (repetition is the best teacher, after all):

1) The Bible is **INSPIRED**

It was uniquely borne of God, produced by the Spirit as He moved in/through ancient authors.

2) The Bible is **INFALLIBLE**

The teachings found within Scripture are perfectly true, accurate and trustworthy.

3) The Bible is **INERRANT**

The information and factual data contained within the Bible is true and free from all error.

4) The Bible is **AUTHORITATIVE**

The Bible—being inspired, infallible and inerrant) is the final authority for faith and practice.

MOVING ALONG

THIS MORNING I want to cover the 2nd and 3rd Fundamental Truths. I want to GROUP them, as they are—in many regards—theologically connected. Allow me to read the 2nd and 3rd Fundamental Truths, and then we will delve in (**SLIDE**)...

WE BELIEVE that there is One True God, who exists in the form of three distinct Persons: The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

WE BELIEVE in the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. As God's Son, Jesus was both fully human and fully divine.

There is MUCH to discuss in these two statements. In fact, there may be more than you think! Though Christians in the modern nearly universally accept these long-held truths, these items were the subjects of intense debate in the early centuries of church history. In your own time,

NOTE – it is worth reading about these early debates and how the Church universal came to accept what Scripture has to say on these matters of the nature of God and of His Christ! But that is well beyond our time today/

FUNDAMENTAL TRUTH #2 PT. 1

Let's consider—in some depth—the 2nd Fundamental Truth:

WE BELIEVE that there is One True God, who exists in the form of three distinct Persons: The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

As you can see, this statement centers upon the NATURE of God. i.e., It has to do with what He is like and the essence of His being. For millennia, humanity has WRESTLED with the nature and existence of God. In that time, numerous concepts have been put forth to define and describe Him. Consider the following:

1) ATHEISM (Atheistic Perspective)

Atheism is founded upon the idea that there is no God/supreme being of any kind. This concept stands in contradiction to the revealed Word of God, for the existence of God is made plain from the opening of Scripture (i.e., In the beginning God...). Scripture does not seek to prove God's existence. Rather, it assumes His existence and operates according to that overarching foundation.

2) AGNOSTICISM (Agnostic Perspective)

Agnosticism is founded upon the belief that nothing is known or can be known of the existence or nature of God. There may be a God – there may not be a God. We have no means of knowing definitively either way. This concept stands in stark contradiction to the Word of God, for the Lord has clearly made Himself and His ways known through the Bible and beyond. We can know definitively that there's a God, what He is like and what He demands.

3) PANTHEISM (Pantheistic Perspective)

Pantheism is the belief that the universe/creation is identical with divinity, for everything composes an all-encompassing 'god.' i.e., God is made up of the trees, the oceans and the matter of the material universe. This belief stands in opposition to the revealed Word of God, which delineates a clear distinction between the creation and the Creator. God is not in His creation: He stands above it as the sovereign Lord, King and Judge.

4) POLYTHEISM (Polytheistic Perspective)

Polytheism is founded upon the belief in many gods. Oftentimes, in polytheistic faiths (e.g., ancient Rome & Greece), the gods/goddesses are themselves creations, overrun by the negative attributes of mankind (i.e., they're petty, vengeful and lustful beings). They are also limited or tribal in authority (each god oversees a particular region or domain). This stands in stark opposition to God's Word. In Scripture, God is revealed as the eternal Creator of all things who rules as the Only Sovereign God. He is not characterized by the carnal nature of man, but is Holy!

5) MONOTHEISM (Monotheistic Perspective)

Monotheism is founded upon the belief that there is only one God, who created and reigns over all things. As you can see, this best fits within the framework of Scripture and our overarching statement of belief:

WE BELIEVE that there is ONE TRUE GOD, who exists in the form of three distinct Persons: The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Biblical Christianity is a MONOTHEISTIC religion and belief system.

FUNDAMENTAL TRUTH #2 PT. 2

There is a vast amount of BIBLICAL SUPPORT for this position. Here is but a small selection...

Deuteronomy 6:4 (NIV, 1984)

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.

Psalms 86:10

10 For you are great and do marvelous deeds;
you alone are God.

Isaiah 44:10b–11

. . . Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me. 11 I, even I, am the LORD, and apart from me there is no savior.

Ephesians 4:3–6

3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called— 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

FUNDAMENTAL TRUTH #2 PT. 3

As we continue on in our statement of faith, things begin to go a bit DEEPER. In fact, what we are about to discuss TRANSCENDS our powers of comprehension and understanding. As this is the case, we must regard what the Word has to say by faith and not subordinate Scripture to our powers of intellect and reason. Great damage is done to biblical truths when we seek to contain them within/limit them to man-made boxes!

Let's look again to the 2nd Fundamental Truth (Emphasis Mine):

WE BELIEVE that there is One True God, WHO EXISTS IN THE FORM OF THREE DISTINCT PERSONS: The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

This statement focuses upon the topic/subject of the TRINITY. Though this word itself is NOT found in Scripture, it DOES reflect biblical teaching...

i.e., There is a Triune nature to God, as He exists as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Let's dig deeper!

FUNDAMENTAL TRUTH #2 PT. 4

To begin, we do NOT believe that each member is 1/3 of God. We cannot reduce God to an equation where Father + Son + the Holy Spirit = God. To do so strips each member of the Trinity of their divine nature.

God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are EACH fully divine. Consider (briefly):

1) The Deity of God the FATHER

The Father is called God in various places (cf. John 6:27; 1 Peter 1:2). There is no debate that the Father is clearly divine in nature, so we will not linger on this point.

2) The Deity of God the SON

This is a point that we shall address with the 3rd Fundamental Truth (moments ahead). Perhaps the easiest proof of this biblical reality is John 1:1...

John 1:1

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God

3) The Deity of God the HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is called God in Acts 5:3–4 and possess the unique attributes of God (e.g., His is omniscient, omnipresent, etc.).

FUNDAMENTAL TRUTH #2 PT. 5

At the same time, we do NOT believe in three Gods. Christianity is NOT a polytheistic faith. We believe that there is One True God comprised of Three Distinct PERSONS (Emphasis Mine).

WE BELIEVE that there is One True God, who exists in the form of Three DISTINCT Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Unlike the ancient heresy of MODALISM (in its various forms), we do NOT believe that each member is a mode or manifestation of God. Modalists believed that the One True God expressed Himself to humanity via three modes (i.e., 'masks' if you will). But this teaching does NOT capture what is taught in the whole of the Word, as this does a disservice to the unique nature and role of EACH!

- The Father is not the Son nor is He the Holy Spirit
- The Son is not the Father nor is He the Holy Spirit
- The Holy Spirit is not the Father nor is He the Son

There is that which makes each member of the Trinity DISTINCT (cf. Athanasian Creed). This reality manifests itself in the Bible numerous times. Time will not permit me to cover each, so allow me to present one brief example:

Matthew 3:13–17

13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. 14 But John tried to deter him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?”

15 Jesus replied, “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.” Then John consented.

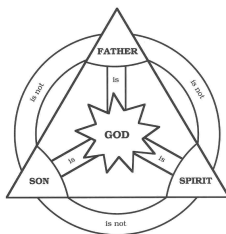
16 As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. 17 And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”

Q. What do we see herein? We see the operation of each member of the Godhead (Trinity)...

- The SON is baptized
- The SPIRIT descends
- The FATHER speaks

FUNDAMENTAL TRUTH #2 PT. 6

Perhaps an ILLUSTRATION might be of some aide. Consider the following (**SLIDE**):



Of course, this particular teaching/reality is a MYSTERY to us. There is nothing in all of creation that serves as a proper illustration/frame of reference for us to grasp this truth. The very nature of God transcends us.

Frankly, I have arrived at the place where I am CONTENT in serving a God who is beyond my capacity to fully understand. If my cats cannot fully understand me, and if I cannot fully understand my wife, how can I hope to understand the God of the universe? My reason must submit to the clear revelation of God, for the Word is inspired, infallible and inerrant!

WE BELIEVE that there is One True God, who exists in the form of Three distinct Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Let's move along (**SLIDE**)...

FUNDAMENTAL TRUTH #3 PT. 1

Let's continue on with the 3rd—and closely related—Fundamental Truth:

WE BELIEVE in the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. As God's Son, Jesus was both fully human and fully divine.

This statement centers upon the NATURE of Christ. i.e., It has to do with what He is like and the essence of His being. For millennia humanity has wrestled with the nature of Christ. In that time, various theological constructs have been put forth:

1) DOCETISM (NOT HUMAN/FULLY DIVINE)

Docetism was the belief that Jesus was NOT human. He only 'seemed' to be human, and therefore He only 'seemed' to suffer and die. Thus, Jesus did NOT die to offer the sacrifice for the sin of lost humanity. You can see the obvious problem(s) with this system of teaching...

2) EBIONISM (FULLY HUMAN/NOT DIVINE)

Ebionistic thought maintained that Jesus was a man who was adopted by God at His baptism. He was 'made' the Son of God through adoption (as we are). This denies the clear biblical teaching of Jesus' eternal role as God the Son.

3) NESTORIANISM (AN UNBIBLICAL COMPOSITE)

This belief system taught that the Logos (i.e., the complete deity of God) indwelt the man Jesus, in the same way that God's indwells us by His Spirit. Thus, Christ was a composite of two beings: a distinct human and a distinct divine element (rather than a perfect union of both).

FUNDAMENTAL TRUTH #3 PT. 2

Each system of thought wrestles with how human or divine Jesus was. Was Jesus totally divine, totally human, a little of both? Was He mainly God, mainly man or a combination?

Of course, all of these MISS the mark because they all fail to capture what the full Word reveals.

WE BELIEVE in the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. As God's Son, Jesus was BOTH fully human and fully divine.

Thus, Jesus was not just God or just man or a little of both. Jesus was 100% of each! Again, our minds cannot grasp the reality of such a being because we have absolutely no frame of reference for something/someone like Him! He is transcendent and beyond what we can understand . . . But this IS what the Word reveals:

FUNDAMENTAL TRUTH #3 PT. 3

Q. What is the evidence for the humanity of Christ?

1) He Was Born

-The Gospels are clear that He was born into a human family.

2) He Was Subject to the Human Laws of Growth.

Luke 2:40

40 And the child [Jesus] grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him.

3) He Experienced Weariness/Hunger

-Temptation in the Wilderness (Mt 4)

-Story of the Woman at the Well (John 4)

-Jesus sleeping at the back of the ship (Mk 4)

4) He Partook of Human Customs

-Jesus attended a wedding (John 2:11), funerals, & festivals/feasts

-He had social connections (friends) The 70, 12, 3, & 1

5) He Experienced Mental Pain & Anguish

-John 11:35 – Jesus wept at the death of his friend, Lazarus

-Jesus mourned the death of John the Baptist (Matt 14:12–13)

-Jesus experienced tremendous grief at the Garden of Gethsemane

6) He Experienced Physical Pain/Death

-Let us not forget the Passion & Crucifixion of our Lord

7) He Experienced Temptation

-He was tempted as we are, yet He was without sin

-Jesus was tempted in the wilderness by Satan (Matthew 4)

8) He Died

-This is the greatest commonality He has with humanity in some regards...

Q. Why is SIGNIFICANT for us to recognize Christ's humanity?

Christ empathizes with us (not sympathizes) – He knows what it is like to be us!

Hebrews 4:15–16

15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. 16 Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

FUNDAMENTAL TRUTH #3 PT. 4

Having established the humanity of Christ, let's address His deity. By deity, I mean that Jesus is fully God (i.e., not part of a little v. complete).

At a definite point in history (app. 2,000 years ago) God the Son assumed the form of humanity and lived among us. But He was, is and shall always be God.

Q. What is the biblical evidence for the deity of Jesus Christ?

1) The OT Spoke to the Deity of Christ:

Isaiah 9:6

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace

2) The NT is Explicitly Clear:

Colossians 2:9

9 For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form

Colossians 2:9 (NLT)

For in Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human body

Philippians 2:5–7 (NLT)

5 You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.

6 Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. 7 Instead, he gave up his divine privileges*; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being.

John 1:1

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

3) He Possesses the Attributes/Characteristics of God

He possessed those traits that can only be attributed to the Lord! Scripture reveals Him to eternal, immutable, omniscient, omnipresent, etc. These are capacities that belong alone to God!

4) He Forgave Sin

Again, who can forgive sin but God alone (as sin is a violation against Him)!

Luke 5:17–26

17 One day as he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law, who had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem, were sitting there. And the power of the Lord was present for him to heal the sick. 18 Some men came carrying a paralytic on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus. 19 When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus.

20 When Jesus saw their faith, he said, “Friend, your sins are forgiven.”

21 The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, “Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

22 Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, “Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? 23 Which is easier: to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk’? 24 But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins....” He said to the paralyzed man, “I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.” 25 Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God. 26 Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, “We have seen remarkable things today.”

5) He Received Worship

-Only God is to be worshipped!

Acts 10:25,26- Cornelius fell down to worship Peter. Peter forbade it saying that he himself was just a man. God deserves worship, but men do not. (Cf. Acts 12:20-23; 14:8-18.)

Revelation 22:8,9; 19:10- John sought to worship the angel, but the angel forbade it because he was a "fellow servant." "Worship God."

To worship any created thing - whether man, angel, heavenly body, or some other object in nature (mountain, ocean, etc.) - constitutes idolatry (See 10 Commandments)

-Jesus Reaffirmed this Truth

(cf. Matthew 4:9,10 - Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only)

-But Jesus willingly received the worship of individuals:

Matthew 14:33 - After Jesus had calmed the storm, the disciples worshipped Him saying He was the Son of God

John 9:38 - After Jesus had healed the blind man, He revealed Himself to be the Son of God (v. 35). The man said he believed, and he worshipped Jesus

Luke 24:52 - Even after He had ascended back to heaven, they worshipped Him

Hebrews 1:6 - Angels are instructed by God to worship Jesus

6) He Created and Upholds Creation

Isaiah 44:24

"This is what the Lord says—your Redeemer, who formed you in the womb: I am the Lord, who has made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself

Colossians 1:15–17

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. 17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together

John 1:3

3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

Q. Why is SIGNIFICANT for us to recognize Christ's deity?

A. It leads us to a proper place of worship, reverence and submission.

CONCLUSION

We have covered much thus far:

1) WE BELIEVE that the Bible is inspired by God and declares His design and plan for mankind. The Bible is the revelation of God to man, the infallible, inerrant and authoritative rule of faith and conduct.

2) WE BELIEVE that there is One True God, who exists in the form of three distinct Persons: The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

3) WE BELIEVE in the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. As God's Son, Jesus was BOTH fully human and fully divine.

WE WILL CONTINUE NEXT WEEK...