

## 20. JESUS: LUNATIC, LIAR, OR LORD (5:17-24)

We now come to a passage that is of critical importance, the significance of which is not always realised and often missed amid the seven “I am” statements and signs that the Gospel of John is most notable for. But the theme and statement in these eight verses are crucial. They are also rather unique in their declarations of the deity of Jesus, for as J.C. Ryle states, “Nowhere else in the Gospels do we find our Lord making such a formal, systematic, orderly, regular statement of His own unity with the Father, His divine commission and authority, and the proofs of His Messiahship, as we find in this discourse. ... To me it seems one of the deepest things in the Bible”.<sup>82</sup> This text is also so rich, that only through prolonged study can one truly plumb the depths of their content.

John 5:19-47 can divide into three sections – although these divisions are not strict. In the first, verses 19 to 24, Jesus speaks of his relationship to the Father. In the second, verses 25 to 30, He speaks of His role as the Judge of all mankind. And in the third, verses 31 to 47, Jesus speaks of the three witnesses that establish his claims.

In this study we will look at the first section, but before we do, let us remind ourselves of the context. When Jesus is accused of breaking the Sabbath by healing the lame a man, He does not argue with the Jews over how they misinterpret what is written in the Scriptures about Sabbath. He does not say, “Take out your Torahs, let’s have a Bible study”. Instead, in verse 17 He makes a statement that enrages the Jews to the point that they conspire to kill Him.

### THE FATHER, JESUS, AND THE SABBATH

Before we proceed, we need to understand Jesus’ logic here. He is not saying that because God works on the Sabbath, anyone can work on the Sabbath – that would be a bad application. No, He is saying that because the Father works on the Sabbath, he can. For this defence to be valid, all the factors that apply to God must apply to Jesus – whatever factors justify God’s continuous work on the Sabbath justify His.

Important to not here is that Genesis 2:3 does not say that God rested from all work on the seventh day, but only from the work of creation – other passages describe the sustaining work that He has continued to do since creation (cf. Neh. 9:6; Mat. 5:45; Acts 14:17; 17:25,28; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3; James 1:17). In all these ways, God works every day, even on a Sabbath. Were He to cease working for even one day, we would cease to exist.

What Jesus does here then is justify His Sabbath healing by reminding them of what they already know and accept, that God works on the Sabbath by sustaining life and the laws of the universe and continues His work of judgement and redemption. By claiming He has the right to work on Sabbath as His Father works, Jesus is was stating that He is God. The Jews understand this to mean that He is assuming for Himself the privilege that is peculiar to God, thereby equating Himself with God.

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<sup>82</sup> Ryle, J.C. *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, p. Cited in Leon Morris, 1971, *The Gospel According to John*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, p311.

What Jesus explains in His response is part of the doctrine that we know of as the Trinity today, that of one God as three separate persons who at one and the same time are totally interrelated and interdependent. God comprises three distinct but equal persons who are all at all times, God, and none needs the other in order to exist.

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR STUDY

1. How does knowing that although God rested in Genesis 2:2, He has not stopped working on the Sabbath affect how you view God in your everyday life? What comfort does it bring knowing that He never slumbers nor sleeps (Psa. 121:4)?
2. How does this challenge your view of the Sabbath?

## THE HEART OF THE PROBLEM

So the heart of the problem for the Jews is not that Jesus is just a Sabbath-breaker, but He is a blasphemer too. They understand His words to mean nothing short of peculiar personal Sonship, and thus stating He is equal in nature with God. To the western mind, the idea of son means a different person, but to the Jewish mind, a son is seen as the extension of His father. The word implies identification with, rather than distinction from. So by calling God His father, Jesus is using terminology that the Jews would never use of their relationship to God – they may say “Our Father” or add “in Heaven”, but never simply as “My Father” – that is considered to be blasphemy, which incurs the death penalty (cf. Lev. 24:16). This angers the Jewish leaders and explains the violence of their reaction in verse 18 and their desire to see Jesus executed.

Liberal interpreters who claim that Jesus never referred to Himself as God have a difficult time with these verses. Granted, Jesus never says the words “I am God”, the language and descriptions He uses here and elsewhere prove that He saw Himself as God. What is more, Jesus never denies being God (e.g. when Thomas referred to Him as in John 20:28-29).

As C.S. Lewis rightly said concerning the claims Jesus makes about Himself:

“I am here trying to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: ‘I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God.’ That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher, He would either be a lunatic – on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg – or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God; or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronising nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to”.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Lewis, Clive Staples. 1944. *Mere Christianity*. London, UK: Harper Collins Publishers, p52. This quote is often referred to as the Great Trilemma where Lewis proposes that for any man to make the claims Jesus does, he is a lunatic, a liar, or is who he is claiming to be.

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR STUDY

1. Lewis' great trilemma has been proven to be an unsound argument for various reasons,<sup>84</sup> however, it does raise a serious question that people still have to answer. To quote the question as Jesus asked it of His disciples in , "Who do you say that I am?" How do many people answer this question today?
2. How do you answer the above question now compared to before you became a believer, or even, before you began this study?

## FOUR MYSTERIES OF JESUS' RELATIONSHIP WITH THE FATHER REVEALED

Jesus begins His defence in verse 19 with the phrase, "*Truly, truly*". This underlines the importance of what He is about to say (notice its recurrence in verses 24 and 25). Each time Jesus uses this phrase it calls the listener to pay attention and further implies that there is to be no doubt regarding what follows, they are the truth and come from God Himself.

But if what Jesus has already said in verse 17 is not controversial enough for the Jews causing them to want to kill Him, then the statement that follows the "*Truly, truly*" is even more so, "*the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing*". This is a strong affirmation of Jesus working with the Father and not independently of Him, as if He has personal, first-hand knowledge of the mind of God. But who can know the mind of God except God Himself? This is Jesus stating in no uncertain terms that He is equal with the Father and is something that would have further enraged the Jews.

The Greek text of verses 19–24 is structured around four *gar* statements – *gar* is usually translated into English as "*for*" or "*because*" – unfortunately in the ESV, only three "*for*" statements are seen, in verses 19, 20, and 21. For some reason they do not include the fourth in verse 22. These four statements provide proof of how verse 19 is possible and how the Son is in a relationship with the Father.

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR STUDY

1. How does John 5:19 show both the equality of the Son with the Father, and yet also the Son's submission to the Father. Write down some thoughts on why both are so crucial.

## THE SON IS SUBMISSIVE TO THE FATHER (V19B)

The first proof is that Jesus does not act independently of the Father but does exactly the same things that the Father does. In the original Greek this phrase reads, "He did the very same things in the very same manner". The verse teaches the submission of Jesus to the Father, for the Son is pictured as completely obedient to the Father and does not do anything on His own initiative.

What is important to note here is that this is not subordination, but submission. There is a difference. Subordination implies that one person imposes or demands submission of another as the weaker or inferior person. However, submission means that one willingly submits to the authority of the other,

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<sup>84</sup> Visit <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/is-c-s-lewiss-liar-lord-or-lunatic-argument-unsound/> for a summary of the argument.

without any distinction between power or authority. For example, two equal partners in a business – both have the same percentage of ownership and decision-making powers, but one partner (A) submits to the other (B) in some aspect of the business, perhaps in the area of finances, while the other (B) submits in the area of managing the staff. There is a submission in role, not in power or authority – one is not inferior or less important than the other. Unfortunately our western worldview assumes submission equals inferiority. But it does not, and it is certainly not the case with Jesus and the Father.

This is brought out with Jesus' statement that He does "*Whatever the Father does*". This means He has the same powers as the Father, be it creation, sustaining that creation, raising the dead (as we will see later), or salvation, whatever the Father does Jesus has the ability to do the same. He merely submits Himself to the Father by only doing those things He sees the Father doing – if the Father does not do it, neither will Jesus, despite having the power to do so.

This emphasises that the Son does nothing apart from the Father's will. Do you remember the context of this? Jesus heals the cripple at the Pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath. He also tells the man to take up his bed mat and go home. All of which breaks the Jewish Sabbath laws. In the minds of the Jew's they are saying, "God told us to keep the Sabbath and do no work at all, but you do not obey the law". Jesus response is, "I can do heal this man and tell Him to carry His bed, because that is my Father's will". Despite their accusation that He is disobeying God's laws, Jesus tells them that is not possible because all that He does has the full approval of the Father. Jesus is further implying that the Father led Him to the invalid and told Him to heal him in the first place.

To state the argument fully: The Son is submissive to the Father in that it is impossible for Jesus to take independent, self-determined action that would set him over against the Father as another god, for all the Son does is the same as, and in agreement with, all that the Father does. To do anything outside of that would mean that He is not the Son.

This proof is seen throughout the Gospel of John as Jesus continually asserts that His work is to do the will of the Father (cp. 4:34; 5:30; 8:28; 12:50; 15:10). The Father initiates and sends the Son, and the Son responds by obeying and performing His Father's will. In this sense, the Son is the Father's agent though, as John goes on to insist, much more than an agent, for John presents Jesus as the Son, not as the slave, of God, yet still God.

One final comment here, Jesus is still in submission to the Father. Consider Paul's words in Philippians 2:9-11, "*Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*". Note the underlined clause – even when Jesus is highly exalted with the name above all names and all creation is bowing to Him, all the glory still goes to the Father. Jesus submitted to the Father when He came to earth, while He lived on earth as a man, is doing now as He intercedes to the Father on our behalf (cf. Rom. 8:34), and will continue to do so for all eternity, yet He will always, equally, be God.

This leads us to the second *gar* (“for”) statement that provides the basis for the Son’s submission to the Father.

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR STUDY

1. Why does Jesus’ submission to the Father not imply inferiority to the Father? What parallels does this have in Christian marriage (Eph. 5:22-33)?
2. Have you ever considered how the Father expresses His love for the Son? What are some of the ways that you can think of?

## THE SON IS LOVED BY THE FATHER (V20)

The second “for” explains how it is possible that the Son can do whatever the Father does: it is because the Father loves the Son and shows Him all He does. Their relationship is not one of master and slave, nor of employer and employee, but of a Father and a Son who are united by love. We have already seen that the Father loves the Son 3:35 and expresses it by giving “*all things into His hand*”. There the Greek word for love is *agapé* (self-giving love), here though it is *phileō* – brotherly or familial love. Although John tends to use these two terms interchangeably implying no difference in meaning (cp. 3:16, 35; 11:3, 5, 36; and 21:15–17), the use of brotherly or familial love highlights an important aspect of their relationship. Despite Jesus’ submission to the Father in terms of role, they are on the same level in their relationship – they are family. Showing yet again that neither is inferior to the other.

The tense of the verb is in the continuous active tense, in other words, the Father’s love for the Son is ongoing – He never ceases to love the Son. How the Father expresses His love for the Son here is through His continuous disclosure to the Son of all that He does. This is further revelation that Jesus is God in that no-one has ever seen all of God’s works. Although God has revealed many things about Himself since creation that is recorded for us in Scripture, there are many things that have not been recorded and no man has witnessed everything. But Jesus has, and because He has, it means He has to be eternal. This further implies that the Son does the things He is shown and that His actions do not proceed from merely human motivation. He acts only in accordance with the divine revelation from His Father. Furthermore, He looks forward to even greater works that He will be shown. This will result in awe by his hearers. In effect Jesus is saying to them, “You are astonished that I healed this cripple and with all the other miracles I have performed so far, but wait, more and greater things are to come”.

So because of His love for his Son, the Father shows Him all He does, and likewise, because the Son loves His Father, He obeys Him perfectly and does whatever the Father does, two important truths follow:

1. By obeying His Father and doing the same deeds as the Father, the Son reveals the Father to the people. The Son exegetes the Father (cp. “*makes Him known*” in 1:18). Hence Jesus can say to His disciples in 14:9, “*Whoever has seen me has seen the Father*” and questions how they can ask Him to show them the Father – He has done that the entire three years He has been with them.
2. The disclosure of the nature and character of God does not depend on God’s love for us, but rather on the Father’s love for the Son and on the Son’s love for the Father. If the Father and the

Son did not love each other in the first place, then God would never have shown His love towards the world. This theme is further developed in chapters 14 to 17 – the cross and all it entails is the result of the reciprocal love between the Father and the Son.

So not only does Jesus submit to God through obedience to do the Father's will, but the Father does those very things Himself. What is more, is that the Father will show the Son even greater things than what has occurred so far (i.e. the signs, teachings, and baptisms). The Son then, in obedience to Father and doing what the Father will show him, will perform those "*greater things*" (e.g. raising Lazarus, confronting the Pharisees and Sadducees, etc.), all culminating in the cross. All this, Jesus says, will be to the amazement of His enemies (cp. 10:38).

However, we seem to have a complication when it comes to the cross, because when did Jesus see His Father die? He does not – He is spirit (cf. 4:24) and without a body, therefore He cannot die. What we need to consider is what the work is, rather than the exact manner in which it is done. Throughout the Old Testament, God forgives and saves His people in response to the various sacrifices. It is the same in the New Testament – God forgives and saves us through the sacrifice that is Jesus, who also serves as the High Priest offering the sacrifice. Therefore, Jesus is fulfilling the pattern laid before Him by the Father since the fall in Genesis 3. The Father made provision for reconciliation to happen. He showed grace instead of wrath. He saved those who seemed eternally lost. Jesus does the same.

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR STUDY

1. Consider the first sentence of John 20. How does it enlarge your understanding of the Trinity? How does it enlarge your understanding of Jesus' experience of life on earth?

## THE SON IS EMPOWERED BY THE FATHER (V21)

The third "*for*" statement is in verse 21. Here we begin to get a taste of the "*greater things*" in verse 20 – Jesus will raise people from the dead. Up to this point in the Gospel of John, Jesus has performed signs. Three of them have been recorded for us, whereas those He performs in Jerusalem are merely hinted at. However, we have not yet seen Him raise anyone from the dead.

Now the Jews understood that God is able to raise people from the dead. They further believe that it is a task that only the Father can perform (see Deu. 32:39; 1Sa. 2:6; 2Ki 5:7). So the first part of Jesus' statement that "*the Father raises the dead and gives them life*" would have been accepted without question, even by His opponents. And as amazing as that would be there was no need to marvel at it as it is common knowledge that God can do that, and has indeed done so in the past. However, what is marvellous the rest of Jesus' statement the son can also give life. This is adding fuel to the fire of their hatred towards Him.

Now this resurrection must be understood in both the physical and spiritual senses – He can raise people from the grave physically, but also raise people spiritually. It must also be understood in terms of timing, as Jesus can raise people now, but can and will do so later at the final resurrection, both physically and

spiritually. Just as the Father takes dead bodies and raises them to new life, so the Son takes people who, though their bodies are alive, are yet in a state of death, and raises them to spiritual life. Notice the significance of the clause “*to whom He will*”. People may not demand a miracle. Rather, the Son gives life to whom He chooses, and not when people choose.

Important to note here is that although Jesus is God and therefore has the physical power to raise people from the dead, He can only exercise that power because the Father has empowered Him to do so. In other words, because Jesus is in submission to the Father, Jesus can only raise people because the Father has given Him permission to do so. God is the source of life and He alone has power to reverse the laws of the material world and to bring life out of death. But here we see that the Father has conferred this power to the Son, and so now may raise whomever He will to life. So in this sense, Jesus is not simply the Father’s instrument to raise people, but that He chooses who to raise. A demonstration of this power appears in the later sign of the raising of Lazarus (cf. 11:41-44).

### THE SON IS HONOURED WITH THE FATHER (VV22-23)

The final *gar* statement in the Greek appears at the beginning of verse 22 – it should literally read, “*For the Father judges no one*”. The thought now moves on to judgement and gives us the reason why Jesus is empowered to raise the dead – the Son is the one who judges, not the Father. This is something new to Jews. They hold that the Father is the Judge of all people, and they expect to stand before Him at the great day of the Lord. But Jesus tells them now that the Father has given over the authority to judge over to Jesus (cf. Gen. 18:25; Jud. 11:27).

### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR STUDY

1. Discuss the implications of Jesus’ claim in verse to give life to whom He wishes. How does this interface with our responsibility to believe?
2. What is the underlying assumption in verse 22 – as is clear, for example, in Psalm 96:1-13?

We will consider more on this judgement next time, so for now let us focus on why the Father has done this in verse 23.

The Father has given Jesus the authority to judge and raise the dead so that all may honour the Son in the same way that they honour the Father. We have seen that the Son does everything that the Father does, but now He declares that its purpose is so that the Son may be at one with the Father not only in nature and activity, but also in honour. This goes far beyond making Jesus a mere ambassador who acts in the name of the Father who sent him. It also dismisses those statements of Jesus just being a great teacher or good man. The Jews are right in detecting that Jesus is “*making himself equal with God*” (cf. vv. 17–18).

But this does not in any way diminish the Father. Indeed, when the Son is glorified, so too is the Father (cf. 12:28). As we saw earlier in Philippians 2:9–11, on that day when every knee shall bow and every tongue confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord, all will be to the glory of God the Father.

But then Jesus drops a bombshell when He declares in verse 23 that he who does not honour the Son does not honour the Father who sent him. Likewise, to deny, belittle, mock, or refuse the Son, is to treat the Father in the same way, since the Father sent Him and confirmed His claims. Such is the state of these Jews who criticise Jesus despite the evidence in the signs He performs. And such is the state of any today who deny Jesus and fail to worship Him as God.

Consider what Jesus is stating here – that He receives the honour that only the Father deserves. This is incontrovertible evidence of Jesus' deity. Listen to what God says in Isaiah: *“For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another”* (Isa. 48:11; emphasis added). God will not give his glory or honour to someone else, yet He gives it to Jesus, confirming that Jesus God. Therefore, because the Father and Son are one, He ought to receive the same kind and degree of honour as the Father. The fact that Jesus should be honoured *“just as”* the Father proves that He is equal with the Father as God.

These are truly amazing claims that Jesus makes and they bring us back to the great trilemma of CS Lewis. Such a statement belongs to one who is Himself to be addressed as God (cf. 20:28). If you or I had to say something like this we would be dismissed with pity or scorn. No one in their right mind would choose to worship us as Lord. Yet this is exactly what Jesus is calling us to do. As Lewis points out, these statements leave us with three options: that Jesus is a lunatic and is to be ignored, or that He is a liar and makes these statements to deceive people, or Jesus is who He says He is and is to be believed, followed and honoured. There is no other rational option: Jesus is either a lunatic, a liar, or is indeed Lord. Who do you say that He is?

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR STUDY

1. How would you lovingly tell someone that any system of worship that does not honour Jesus as the true God is a lie?

## A RICH TEXT

John 5 is such a rich text that as you begin to study it, so many truths about Jesus begin to unfold. Although we have dealt with these verses by following the *“for”* statements and their arguments, another way is to consider it verse-by-verse (extending it to verse 26), which presents another set of seven:

The Son is one with the Father in ...:

1. **... work (v17):** The Father and Son share the same work. They have different roles in the work: The Son did not send himself into the world, the Father did. The Father did not die on the cross, the Son did. There are different roles, but what the Father does and what the Son does align together in one great work, which is to redeem the world.



2. **... will (v19):** Jesus does not act independently of the Father. The Son has not come into the world to “do his own thing.” The Son sees what the Father is doing. The Son pays attention to what the Father is doing and follows the lead.
3. **... love (v20):** The Father shows the Son all that he is doing.
4. **... authority (v21):** Raising the dead involves the authoritative exercise of sovereign power. The Father and the Son are one in the exercise of this authority. What the Father does, the Son does.
5. **... justice (v22):** All throughout the Old Testament we are told that God is the judge. And here we are told that the Father has given all judgement to the Son. That means people of every religion (and no religion) will one day stand before and give account to Jesus Christ who died for sins.
6. **... honour (v23):** When you honour Jesus Christ you honour the Father. Whenever we worship the Son, the Father is honoured. If that were not so, our worship would be blasphemy (cp. Phi. 2:10).
7. **... life (v26):** The perfect union of the Father and the Son is seen in a shared life. The Father has life in himself, and the Son has life in himself.

One can also divide the text through to verse 29 by using the phrase “*Truly, truly*” with the main divisions, as follows:

Truly, truly, ...

1. ... Jesus is like the Father (vv19-23)
2. ... Jesus is the giver of life (v24)
3. ... Jesus is coming to judge the world (vv25-29)

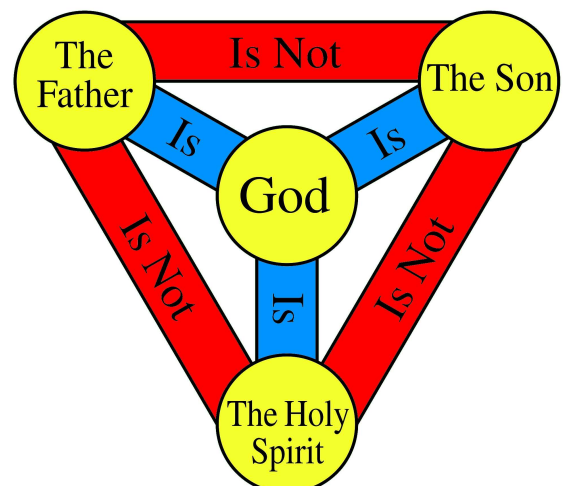
John 5 truly is a rich chapter.

### BONUS STUDY: THE TRINITY

The doctrine of the Trinity is difficult to grasp, so here are some verses and a discussion on the analogies often used to explain it for additional study.

#### Important Texts on the Trinity

- There is only one God and Creator: Deu. 6:4; Isa. 44:6, 24, 46:9
- The Father is God: John 17:3; 1Co. 8:6
- The Son is God: John 20:28; Heb. 1:8; Col. 2:9
- The Holy Spirit is God: Acts 5:3-4; Heb. 3:7-11
- The Father is eternal: 1Co. 8:6; Mal. 3:6
- The Son is eternal: Heb. 1:2, 10-12; Col. 1:15-17
- The Holy Spirit is eternal: Heb. 9:14; Job 33:4; Psa. 104:30
- The Father is not the Holy Spirit: John 14:26, 15:26
- The Holy Spirit is not the Son: Acts 10:38; John 16:13-15
- The Son is not the Father: John 6:38, 8:16, 38, 17:5



- The Father glorifies the Son: John 8:50, 54; 12:23; 17:1
- The Son glorifies the Father: John 7:8; 17:4
- The Spirit glorifies the Son: John 16:14
- The Son is subject to the Father: John 5:30; 6:38; 7:18; 9:4; 10:18
- The Holy Spirit is subject to the Son: John 16:7
- Three distinct persons: Mat. 28:19; 2Co. 13:14; Eph. 4:4-6

## Human Analogies Fall Short

With all good intentions people have tried to explain the Trinity using items from the natural world, history, and philosophy. However, every one of them falls short and lead to heresy. Here are some of the more common examples:

1. **Water or Man Analogies:** H<sub>2</sub>O can exist as a liquid (water), solid (ice), or gas (steam), but it is always H<sub>2</sub>O. A similar analogy says that God is like one man who is simultaneously a father, brother, and uncle. These analogies do not work because they blend together the persons of the trinity. The technical term for this is Modalism. Modalism sees God as taking on different forms or modes at different times. In each analogy, you have the same thing – H<sub>2</sub>O or the same man – just in a different form. Applied to God, you could say that in the Old Testament He appears as the Father, in the New He appears as the Son, and now He appears to us as the Spirit. It is important that while we uphold the unity of God, we maintain distinctions between the persons of God. The Father, Son, and Spirit each revealed themselves as unique persons and are all equally God, fulfilling their roles, all at the same time. There are many verses in the Bible that only make sense when we consider them in light of the distinct natures of three persons (e.g. Mat. 11:27; Mark 14:36; John 17; Gal. 4:4-6; Rev. 3:21).
2. **Shamrock or Egg Analogies:** According to legend, St Patrick used a shamrock it to try to explain the trinity to the Irish. The analogy states that just as the shamrock has three sections and is yet one leaf, so God is three and yet one. Another similar analogy uses an egg to make the same point, noting that an egg has a shell, yolk, and white. These analogies fail because they break up the unity of God. When you separate a shamrock or an egg, you only have part of either. Not so with God, for although the persons of God are distinct from each other, they are always united. These analogies lead to a heresy called partialism, which sees God as three parts that can be taken away or separated. This leads to a bigger problem called tritheism – the belief in three gods, which makes Father, Son, and Spirit each a distinct god. Jesus clearly does not see himself this way when he says, *“I and the Father are one”* (John 10:30).
3. **Musical Chord or Team Analogies:** When a guitar is strummed such that a certain combination of strings forms a chord, should it be considered one note, or multiple notes played simultaneously? The same argument can be made for a team who has many members, but together they form one team. However, the notes of the chord still function individually, and there is still a note that is more important than the others. Similarly, each team has a player who is more important or better than others. But the Trinity is perfectly united and equal. Although there is submission by the Son and the Holy Spirit in their roles, they are all equal in substance and nature. These analo-

gies lead to the heresy of subordinationism that posits a hierarchical ranking of the persons of the Trinity, implying subordination of the persons of the Son and the Holy Spirit as if they are inferior to the Father. This goes against passages like Romans 9:5; Philippians 2:6–11; Colossians 1:15–20; 2:9; and Titus 2:13

The problem with all of the above analogies, and all human analogies, is that they describe God by using things that are created. But nothing created is like God, therefore, the analogies fail. Our minds and language are not capable of describing God completely and the task is only further complicated by using such analogies. We must simply accept that God is unique. Even when we see Him face-to-face, we will still not fully understand Him, for if we could, it would mean that we can think like Him, and no-one can, not even the angels. We must simply believe what He has revealed about Himself, even though we can not fully understand or explain it. The best, and only way, to explain the Trinity is through Scripture.

### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR STUDY

1. There are some false teachers who teach that only Jesus is God, or that God appeared in three forms/modes over time. Thus they deny the Trinity. Can such people be saved? Why or why not?
2. Can people who deny the deity of Jesus be saved? Why or why not?