

The Trinity Delusion

An exposé of the doctrine of the Trinity

John 5:18

Because of this then, the Jews sought all the more to kill him, because he not only broke the sabbath but also called God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

The Trinitarian Claim

Since this passage says that Jesus was making himself equal with God, Trinitarians claim this passage also identifies Jesus as God.

The Claim vs. The Facts

Rather than identifying Jesus as God, the facts tell us Jesus is not God.

The Problems with the Claim

1. Fallacious Reasoning

Here in this passage Trinitarians draw the conclusion that since Jesus was making himself *equal* with God, then he must also *be* God by identity. However, it is quite plain to thinking people that being equal with another person does not mean you also share their identity. In fact, it means just the opposite. To be equal to someone else means you are not that someone else by identity. If Jesus is equal with God that does not mean we should conclude he is God by identity. In fact, we must conclude otherwise. If he is equal to God, it means he is not God. God is someone else.

Not only so, it is quite clear that Jesus was being accused of making himself equal with **God the Father**. Anyone can easily see that it would then be quite absurd to claim equality with God the Father would mean he **is** God the Father. For some reason, it is clear to Trinitarians when you put it this way. It should be clear then to anyone, including Trinitarians, that equality with God does

not mean you are God. In fact, it means the opposite. It necessarily means you are not God.

2. John 14:28

At John 14:28, Jesus says, "the Father is greater than I." At John 10:29, he tells us the Father is greater than all. These statements are generally ignored by Trinitarians making this claim. "Greater than" is not the same as "equal to."

3. God is not being identified as Jesus but as the Father

Notice very carefully the identity of God in this passage. Who is it? Jesus is telling the Jews right here who God is and how he is related to their God. He identified the entity known as "God", not as himself, but as **his Father**. And this is also what the Jews understood - that he was calling the person they themselves understood to be "God," his own Father, making himself *God's own Son*. The verse is about Jesus relationship **to** God. The reason the Jews were so angry with Jesus is that he was claiming their own God was his Father. These Jews all had earthly fathers. But Jesus was claiming his Father was God himself. To be God's own son afforded him a much higher status than these Jews who perceived themselves to be the legitimate sons of God and rulers of Israel (see Psalm 82:6; Romans 9:4). These Jews also identify God as their Father (8:41). What irritated them here was that Jesus was claiming to be God's own Son. The identity of "God" was not Jesus but Jesus' Father. Jesus was not claiming to be "God" but rather **God's Son**. The same situation occurs again in John 10. In fact, this is what John is explicitly telling us in this passage. Indeed, they finally charged him with claiming to be the "**son of God**" (19:7). The Jews here do not perceive that he is claiming to be "God" but God's son.

4. Christians: God is our own Father

Even the Jews confessed God was their Father (8:41). God was Jesus' own Father because he was begotten of God by the Spirit of God (Luke 1:35). And he is the firstborn of many brothers (Romans 8:29). All true Christians are born of God; God is

their true Father. They have died to the world, and their old life into which they were naturally born, to live a new life where the Living God is their own Father. God begets them to new life by His Spirit (John 3:3-8). In this way, God is their Father and they are begotten sons of God. What shall we say then? That they are also claiming to be equal to God and they are God too?

5. What Jesus did not do

At Philippians 2:6, we read that although Jesus was in the form of God, he did not regard being equal with God something to seize upon. Paul's point is that **Jesus did not attempt to be equal to God**. Rather he assumed the position of a servant and obediently humbled himself even to death on a cross. Jesus also said he did not glorify himself since such self-glorification means nothing (8:50,54). Jesus didn't seek equality with God. Rather, he denied himself and his own will and serve the One who is higher than himself: his God. He humbled himself to serve his God.

5. Jewish Confusion

The Trinitarian claim also ignores a persistent theme in the Gospel of John - the confusion of the Jews. Nicodemus does not comprehend how a man can be born again. In John 6, the Jews cannot understand how Jesus could say, "I descended from heaven" or, how he could instruct them to eat his flesh. In John 8, Jesus tells us they could not understand what he was saying because they did the desires of their father the devil. For some reason, Trinitarians always think the Jews are getting it right when Jesus keeps pointing out they keep getting it wrong.

Analysis of the Facts

1. The Contextual Facts

A review of what was actually said:

The man departed and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. For this reason the Jews persecuted Jesus, and sought to kill

him, because he had done these things on the Sabbath. But Jesus answered them, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working." Therefore the Jews sought **all the more** to kill him, because he not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was his Father, making himself equal with God. Therefore, Jesus answered...."

The Jews persecuted Jesus for healing on the Sabbath. Jesus responded and then the Jews wanted to kill him even more because now he not only had broken the Sabbath but had called God his own Father. Initially, the Jews were angry that he healed a man on the Sabbath. But when he called God his own Father, they wanted to kill him even more. These contextual facts tell us that Jesus did two things which angered them: (1) broke the Sabbath, and (2) called God his own Father. It would be inconsistent to recognize that he did indeed call God his own Father but insist that he did not break the Sabbath. Jesus, however, explains that breaking the Sabbath is lawful in order to do good.

2. Breaking the Sabbath

It is mistaken to suppose verse 5:18 means the Jews accused Jesus of breaking the Sabbath but he really did not break the Sabbath. Jesus had taught that it was **lawful** to break the Sabbath command.

At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath, and His disciples became hungry and began to pick the heads of grain and eat. But when the Pharisees saw this, they said to Him, "Look, your disciples do what is **not lawful to do on a Sabbath.**" But he said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he became hungry, he and his companions, how he entered the house of God, and they ate the consecrated bread, which was not lawful for him to eat nor for those with him, but for the priests alone? Or have you not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath **the priests in the temple break the Sabbath and are innocent?** But I say to you that something greater than the temple is

here. But if you had known what this means, 'desire compassion, and not a sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent. For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

Departing from there, he went into their synagogue. And a man was there whose hand was withered. And they questioned Jesus, asking, "**Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?**" so that they might accuse Him. And he said to them, "What man is there among you who has a sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will he not take hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable then is a man than a sheep! **So then, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.** Then he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand!" He stretched it out, and it was restored to normal, like the other. But the Pharisees went out and conspired against him, as to how they might destroy Him. Matthew 12:1-14.

Jesus' point is that it is lawful to break the Sabbath to do good on the Sabbath. The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath (Mark 2:27).

Jesus later comments on the same healing incident:

Jesus answered them, "I did one deed, and you all marvel. For this reason Moses has given you circumcision (not because it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and **on the Sabbath you circumcise** a man. If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath so that the Law of Moses will not be broken, **are you angry with me because I made an entire man well on the Sabbath?** Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."

Carefully regard the following statements:

the seventh day is a sabbath of the Lord your God; in it **you shall not do any work**, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. Exodus 20:10.

My Father is working until now, and **I myself am working.** John 5:17

3. Making himself equal to God

That Jesus was indeed making himself equal to God is made clear by the fact that he did call God his own Father. The phrase, "making himself equal to God" is not the second thing Jesus did which made them angry. It is the implication of the second thing Jesus did which made them angry - calling God his own Father. We know that he did indeed call God his own Father. And then we are told the implications of calling God his own Father: making himself equal to God.

But this still leaves a question. In what manner was he equal to God? At this point, it seems there are some who suppose they have been granted a license to resort to their imaginations. Trinitarians resort to using the word "God" as a synonym of the divine nature, "Jesus is God" (i.e. Jesus is divine by nature). But there is nothing in the context to suggest we are to suppose Jesus had the same divine *ousia* as the Father or that anything of the sort is being discussed by John. And as we have already seen, God is already identified in this context and it is not Jesus. By definition, if you are equal to God it means you are not God. Jesus is equal to somebody else who is not him: God. The only thing which can be ascertained from the context as to the identity of God is that God is the Father of Jesus. God in this account is his God. So we are left with the question: How was Jesus equal to God the Father?

4. Jesus Responds and Makes It All Clear

Notice how Jesus immediately responds and clarifies this for them and explains why they are mistaken:

Therefore Jesus answered and said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son is able to do nothing of himself, unless it is something he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also likewise does. For the Father loves the Son, and shows him all things that

He Himself is doing; and the Father will show him greater works than these, so that you will marvel.

Jesus' response shows us that he is trying to clear up any confusion the Jews might have. He wasn't able to do anything by himself. He was only able to do what the Father gave him to do.

"I am not able to do anything from myself." John 5:30.

Jesus clarifies this even further in his comments which follow:

He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him... **I have come in the name of my Father**, and you do not receive me; if another comes in his own name, you will receive him. How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and you do not seek the glory that is from the only God?

The Jews had missed the main point. The point was not that he called God his own Father but that his Father was still working and he was working. Jesus came in his Father's name (5:43; 10:25; 17:6); he did the works of his Father (5:20,36; 10:25,32, 37-38; 14:10-11; 17:4). Jesus was anointed (Acts 10:38) and sent to carry out the Father's will and His purposes. To come in the Father's name meant that he represented the Father in all his words and deeds. The Father had sent Jesus as His representative. Therefore, one was expected to receive Jesus as one would receive the Father Himself. To disrespect Jesus was to disrespect the Father who sent him on His behalf, in His name. In this way, one honoured God who sent Jesus by honouring Jesus whom God sent because Jesus was representing God and acting on His behalf; he was sent in the name of the Father. When you honoured Jesus who God sent; you were honouring God who sent him because Jesus was acting in God the Father's name and in His behalf.

It is in this manner that Jesus was equal to someone else: God who sent him. He was doing the works of his Father, "My Father is still working and I am working." He did not act on his own behalf but did His Father's will and carried out his Father's purposes; the Father abiding in

him did the works (14:10). Notice how Jesus concludes his response to them:

I have come in the name of my Father, and you do not receive me; if another comes in his own name, you will receive him. How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and you do not seek the glory that is from the only God?

5. What really set off these Jews

The Old Testament describes God as the Father of Israel. Even more, it describes the Israelites as children of God. So does the New Testament (John 11:49-52). By definition, that makes God the Father of each of them. But there is something more that these Jews knew. Every Jew knew that the expected Messiah was the son of David because of this promise:

When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. **I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me.** 2 Samuel 7:12-14; see Hebrews 1:5.

See also Psalm 89:20,26-27. These Jews knew this promise of God to David and that is why they believed the Christ would be the son of David. God would be a Father to the coming Christ, the son of David. Note John 7:42. By calling God his own Father, these Jews knew Jesus could be claiming to be the Christ, son of God. This is in fact why he was put on trial. The Christ was, by definition, King of Israel. That meant Jesus was their King and was God's representative on earth. David, God's Christ had ruled as King over the Kingdom of God and sat on the throne of Yahweh their God executing Yahweh's authority. That was something these children of the devil (John 8:44) could not contend with. They did not want any competitors for their authority. Matthew and Mark tell us plainly that they handed Jesus over because of jealousy.

David said to all the assembly, "Now bless the Lord your God." And all the assembly blessed Yahweh, the God of their fathers, and bowed low and worshiped Yahweh and the King... Then Solomon sat on the throne of the Yahweh as King instead of David his father. 1 Chronicles 29:20,23

Conclusion

Jesus was equal to someone else: God. The immediate context is about how Jesus was working and his Father was working (5:17). In this sense, they were equal because both Father and Son were involved in these same deeds. The following context also clarifies to us how Jesus was equal to God. He came in the name of the Father and did the Father's works (4:34). Indeed, the Father abiding in him did the works (14:10). As the representative that God sent of Himself, Jesus was equal to God in this particular respect since he acted on God's behalf. He came in the name of God the Father. However, with respect to his position and authority, his God was greater than him and he never did seek his own will but the will of his Lord and his God. Divine sonship is a function of walking according to the Spirit of God and doing the works of God. "Those who are led by the Spirit of God; these are the sons of God." (Romans 8:14; see John 20:21-22). He did not seek his own glory and did not come in his own name; he came in the name of the only God his Father.

The Father is greater than I.
John 14:28

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