

**Trinity Sunday**  
**IS OUR RELIGION “MAN-MADE” OR “GOD-GIVEN”?**  
**2 Corinthians 13:14**

Our text for Trinity Sunday is 2 Corinthians 13:14 the final sentence of the Apostle Paul's second letter to the Christians living in Corinth. Note the mention of all three persons of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

*May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.*

We pray: O Lord be gracious unto us and bless your word among us. Amen

Dear Friends in Christ,

There are many, many different religions in our world today. How do you know that your religion, the Christian religion, is the right religion? This is an important question. Say you had been born into a Muslim family or a Hindu family, wouldn't you then be Muslim or Hindu? Wouldn't you then think THIS religion, MY religion is right? How do you know that your religion, the Christian religion is right?

What I'm about to say is very unpopular in postmodern (post-Christian) America. It is considered politically incorrect. It is considered judgmental. It is considered unkind and exclusionary. And it is Scriptural. Even though there are many, many different religions in the world today, they fall into two basic categories: true and false...true religion and false religions. The true religion is God-given. False religions are man-made. This almost begs the question which is our theme today, Is Our Religion “Man-Made” or “God-Given”?

Today I'm going to give you three markers, three indicators, that differentiate between a religion that is God-given and one that is man-made. There are many more than three, but today we look at these three indicators of a God-given religion. (They are printed on page 4 in today's bulletin.)

1. An Incomprehensible God
2. A Substitutionary Atonement
3. Amazing Grace

### **1. An Incomprehensible God**

Remember, at two times in the world's history, everybody who was alive had a knowledge of the one, true God, and a knowledge of the one, true religion, the God-given religion. It was true at the time of Adam and Eve, and it was true again at the time right after the flood of Noah. When you look around at the various religions in the world today and the many we know about in history you can see a number of things. You can see remnants of a once commonly-held truth.

You can see also that there is a knowledge of God from nature, the natural knowledge of God. In the world around us there is abundant evidence of the existence of some supreme, divine being. In the various legal systems, both ancient and modern, also in the various rules of right and wrong, you can see evidence that God's law is written on everybody's heart, but clouded by sin's presence

And when you study the god or gods of the various religions, now and in the past, you find a being that is very understandable, very easily comprehended. They seem to be made in man's image, in man's likeness, made to man's specifications. One mark of a man-made religion is an understandable god, a god who has many human traits.

The gods of Greek and Roman mythology lusted after humans and had affairs with them. They bore grudges. They lied and cheated. They fought among themselves. They were motivated by human-like emotions. In some man-made religions the gods need to eat, so food is placed on their altars. They need to drink so beverages are placed on their altars. The gods need to sleep so quiet periods are observed in their temples. All this is very understandable since WE need to eat and drink and sleep. So gods made in our likeness also have these needs. When it comes to man-like gods, the most notable man-made religion is the religion of the Mormons. There we find a god who is not only understandable, at one time he WAS a human, just like us.

But the true God of the Bible is not understandable, he is incomprehensible. Immortal (as we just sang) immortal, invisible God only wise, in light inaccessible hid from our eyes... Today we celebrate the festival of the Holy Trinity. It is a day we set aside each year for review of the Scriptural truth that our God, the only true God, has revealed himself in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Nowhere is this truth from Scripture more clearly and succinctly summarized than in the Athanasian Creed. Please turn to the Athanasian Creed which begins on page 132 in the front of the hymnal, and read with me. I will read the non-indented lines. I ask you to respond with the indented lines. The Athanasian creed, page 132.

The teaching is clear. There is one God and one God only. But he has revealed himself in three persons. The diagram on the front cover of the bulletin comes as close as we can to picturing this truth. There is one God. The Father is God. The Son is God. The Holy Spirit is God. But there are three distinct persons. The Father is not the Son, nor is he the Holy Spirit. The Son is not the Father or the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is neither the Son nor the Father.

Now how can this be? How can one God also be three persons? Quite frankly, I have to tell you it's beyond your comprehension now. It's beyond your understanding now. But someday, when you are no longer locked in time and space, when you come face to face with God at the moment of death, you will see and understand and comprehend the Trinity...the Tri Unity of God. Until then, as the bulletin cover diagram correctly tells you, it is a mystery. You have an incomprehensible God. And that is an indicator that your religion is not man-made but God-given.

I don't know about you, but I take great comfort in the fact that our God is so different from us, he is such a different kind of a being from us, so far above us, that he is incomprehensible. That's the kind of God I want looking out for me, an almighty, all powerful, all knowing, always present God for whom nothing is impossible.

## **2. A Substitutionary Atonement**

Every one of the 6.8 billion inhabitants of this earth has a conscience. All around the world, today and every day, that conscience is not only bearing witness to the existence of a god or gods, that conscience is saying, "The divine forces in this world have a reason to be angry, to be upset with you!" That's why people are not surprised when an earthquake or tidal wave or drought or flood or plague occurs. Their conscience tells them, "This is a punishment you deserve."

Your conscience, too, if you listen to it, will remind you of the existence of sin in your life. Angry words, lustful thoughts, lying, cheating, selfishness, stealing, gossip, over-indulgence, envy, a lack of trust...all these are an affront to a righteous and holy God who demands perfection. These and many more are an abomination to a just God who must punish sin.

Across the centuries man-made religions have come up with all sorts of ways to appease the rightfully angry God...everything from hurting yourself - starving, whipping, cutting with knives to hurting others - human sacrifices. Christianity is very different and it stands alone in this regard. We teach a substitutionary atonement.

As the Bible clearly shows, the second person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ became fully human to be your substitute. Hebrews 2:14 tells us, *Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity.* He lived here without sin. He obeyed every one of God's laws, and he did so as your substitute. Then, he himself, the sinless Son of God, paid the price for all sin with his cruel death by crucifixion. The moment you come to faith in Jesus, you receive the benefits of Jesus' life and his death. His perfect keeping of the law is credited to you and your sins are paid for in full.

Man-made religious systems say, "It's up to you! Obey these rules, submit to this lifestyle, live this way, eat this, don't eat that, follow these rituals and if you do well enough, God will be appeased...if you do well enough." At death, those man-made religions that believe in an afterlife say, "You get to heaven or paradise or nirvana by what you do." Your religion, Christianity says, "You get to heaven not because of what you do, but because of what Jesus has done." That's a substitutionary atonement through faith in Jesus.

1 Corinthians 2:7 *...we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden - hidden from the minds of man. We would never think up a substitutionary atonement on our own. 1 Corinthians 2:9 "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him."* Substitutionary atonement - another indication that your

religion is God-given and not man-made. Salvation by works - that's a man-made religion. Salvation by faith - that's a God-given teaching.

### **3. Amazing Grace**

In most religious systems that now exist and that have ever existed, who you are, what you are and what you do determines how you are treated. For example, Eastern religions have a concept of KARMA. This is primarily a Hindu doctrine. Whatever good or evil an individual does will result in happiness or sorrow for that individual. Do good and the ultimate consequence is happiness. Do evil and the ultimate consequence is sorrow. Now this makes sense to us humans. It seems fair to us.

God's ways are so far above us. His motives are way beyond our comprehension. He says, "I don't care who you are. I don't care where you came from. I don't care what your past is. *I have loved you with an everlasting love* Jeremiah 31:3. This is a love that is beyond comprehension. We call it 'agape' love, undeserved love, love for the undeserving. Romans 5:8, *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* Before there was anything good in you, God's love chose you to be his own. You will never know the limits of God's love because God's love is without limits. We call this undeserved, limitless love 'Amazing Grace.'

Amazing Grace...Amazing Grace could not come from the mind of man. It comes from a God who describes himself with the one word 'LOVE.' Love is not just a quality that God has. Love is the totality of what he is. And his love for you and me is nothing short of amazing...Amazing Grace. And it is this Amazing Grace that motivates you not fear of judgment, not fear of punishment. It motivates you to respond with a love for one another and a love for him who first loved you. It motivates you even to love your enemies and pray for those who seek your harm. This Amazing Grace motivates you to live for him, to serve him, to witness your faith.

How can you tell whether a religion is man-made or God-given? Look for these three signs:

1. An Incomprehensible God
2. A Substitutionary Atonement
3. Amazing Grace

Man-made religions lead to destruction and death. The one God-given religion leads to eternal life in the presence of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit forever.

Let us pray:

O almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

You are a God beyond our comprehension. You exist beyond the limits of our finite wisdom. We give you thanks, praise, honor and glory for rescuing us from our destiny in hell, for bringing us into the family of believers, and for promising us eternal bliss with you in heaven. Help us to be witnesses of the TRUTH in a world that follows the LIE so that others may join with us around your glorious throne in heaven. Amen.