

# LIVING WATERS NEWSLETTER

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## THE FULLNESS OF GOD

“It was the Father’s good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in him...for in him all the fullness of Deity (the Divine nature, II Pet. 1:4) dwells in bodily form and in him you have been made full (complete, NASB) and he is the head over all rule and authority” (Col. 1:19; 2:9, 10). If you take a glass and start to fill it with water, when is it finished or full? You keep filling and filling what happens if you keep pouring? What is the “run over” called? A spill? A waste? Excess? It is wasted water. Relate this concept to religion. Through the centuries and in today’s religious world religionists have tried to add something (sometimes many things) to the already sufficiency of God and Christ’s completed work. Religion adds certain doctrines and rituals in order for us to be accepted by God. Nothing can be added to what God has revealed Himself to be, and Christ did all that is necessary for us to have access to the Father. Our works cannot add to that which Christ has done.

Note some examples in the Old Testament where the fullness of the commands of God was not enough and adding to them was disastrous. During the patriarchal times any man could sacrifice to God on an altar they built. (Some examples: Noah, Gen. 8:20; Abraham, Gen. 12:7; 13:18; Jacob, Gen. 33:20; Moses, Ex. 17:15, 24:4). When the tabernacle was built only the priest were allowed to offer sacrifices and they had to be offered in the tabernacle, and later the temple. Numbers 16-17 records the fact of a rebellion in the wilderness against Moses and Aaron by Korah, Dathan and Abiram, who said “All the congregation are, holy, every one of them...” (16:3). They were saying the people had a right to sacrifice as well as the priests. God brought judgment upon them and established the priests as the only acceptable ones to offer sacrifices. The old system of anyone building an altar and offering a sacrifice was over. All sacrifices had to be offered by the priest in the tabernacle. However, from the time they entered Canaan until the exile under Nebuchadnezzar there were many that insisted on “worshipping God” in the high places they built. This led to the idolatry of their worshipping the false gods of the pagans on the high places. The sin of adding the high places to their worship is condemned in Jeremiah 7:15; 17:3; 19:5 and 32:35. Ezekiel 6 also describes God’s judgment against them.

Again adding to the fullness of God’s commands is illustrated in the fact that in celebration of the Passover there was to be only one lamb offered. “Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year; ye shall take it from the sheep or from the goats” (Ex. 12:5). Only one animal was to be offered. If anyone thought that one offering did a good job, then two offerings would do more, it would become a personal sacrifice beyond what God required and would be a declaration to try to placate God by our own acts He does not require. When the Passover lamb was offered there was no more that could be done to enhance the sacrifice. Christ was our Passover lamb sacrificed for us and there is nothing else we can add to make us any more acceptable to God. “There is no longer any offering for sin” (Heb.10:18).

In the wilderness Moses added ritual to the fullness of the command of God and as a result was not permitted to enter the Promised Land. When there was no water for the congregation God commanded Moses: “Take the rod and assemble the congregation and *speak* to the rock before their eyes, that it may yield its water...so Moses took the rod from before the Lord just as He had commanded him; and Moses lifted up his hand and *struck* the rock twice with his rod; and water came forth abundantly, and the congregation and their beasts drank. But the Lord said to Moses “Because you have not believed Me, to treat Me as holy, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them” (Num.20:8-12). Dr. Gary North in commenting on these verses in his book *The Sinai Strategy* wrote: “Our possession of power is not based on our ability to repeat precise rituals, or on our position in the ‘chain of being.’ Our power is dependent on the providence of God, not the kingdom of man, which is our primary goal (Matt. 6:33).” The “glass” of God’s commands is full. Anything added to them is a waste and not acceptable to God. Therefore to add to anything God has revealed is to say His revelation is not complete, we thus assume the right to add to what God has rendered complete.

The word “fullness” (*plaroma*) according to *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon* means complete (Col. 2:10), wholly filled, totality. The Apostle Paul uses the word to describe the Divine nature of God as He dwelt in Christ; Col. 1:19: “In him (Christ) all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell” and His dwelling is the church: Eph. 1:22, 23: “...and gave him to be head over all things the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all” Eph. 3:19: “That you may be filled to all the fullness of God.” The “fullness of God” expresses His completeness, His totality, His oneness. He is “all in all” (I Cor. 15:28). Jeremiah 23:24 states: “Do I not fill the heavens and the earth says the Lord.” The prophet Isaiah gives us an example of the fullness of God revealed in the Old Testament: “O Lord of host, thou art God, even thou alone” (37:16)... “Understand that I am He. Before me there was no God formed, and there will be none after Me” (43:10)... “I am the first and I am the last; and beside me there is no God...Is there a God beside me? Yea there is no God; I know not any” (44:6, 8)... “There is no other God beside me, there is none except Me” (45:21)... “I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like me” (46:9). In the New Testament when Jesus was asked “Which is the foremost commandment?” his answer was: “The foremost is, ‘Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord...the second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:28-31). John 17:3 states: “And this is eternal life that they may know Thee, *the only true God*, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.” Paul echoes this when he wrote: “Now to the King eternal immortal, invisible, *the only God*, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen” (I Tim. 1:17). And again: “There is *only one God*, and one mediator also between God and men, the *man* Jesus Christ” (I Tim. 2:5). Even the demons believe there is only one God: “You believe that God is one, you do well; the demons also believe and shudder” (James 2:19). God is referred to as “God Almighty” 48 times in the Old Testament and 10 times in the

New Testament. Yet in 325 AD this “fullness” of God Almighty, the only God, was not adequate for 318 quarreling Bishops and a pagan Emperor, Constantine, who professed Christianity without giving up his pagan gods, so in the council of Nicaea they declared the one true God to be more than one, and in 381 AD in the council of Constantinople the Holy Spirit, that is the presence of God and Christ: (John 14:15), was added to God’s fullness. St. Augustine, a century later developed this teaching into a doctrine of the Trinity in which The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit were separate personalities, all co-equal and co-eternal, thus exchanging the one God into a “Triune God,” something not mentioned in Scripture.

*The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. XV 1913, p. 47 (taken from the internet) states the fundamental belief of the Trinity as accepted in most Protestant churches today as: “the central doctrine of the Christian religion is that the unity of the Godhead there are three persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, these three persons being truly distinct one from another. Thus, in the words of the Athanasian Creed: ‘the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God and yet they are not three God’s but one God’...The Persons are co-eternal and co-equal: all alike are uncreated and omnipotent.” It is in the creeds, then, where, for the first time, the term “three persons” is used to describe God. When Trinitarians say they believe in God, they really mean they believe in “three persons” of God. Nowhere in the Bible is God spoken of as three persons. The fullness of the one true God, the Almighty has been improved upon by man.

The common defense of the trinity is it cannot be explained or understood, but we are to believe it in spite of this, As Steve Berg stated in *Christianity Today*: “The trinity can’t be explained, it is mysterious, it can’t be understood, but that doesn’t make it untrue.” Deuteronomy 29:29 states; “the secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of the law.” God’s word is a “revelation” and we are commanded many times in Scripture to know and understand the “mysteries” which have been revealed. We have received the Spirit from God “that we might know the things freely given us by God” (I Cor. 2:12). If God has revealed Himself in His Son, to make it something mysterious, complicated and unable to understand is adding to the fullness of God and is a contradiction of God’s revelation in scripture. They can’t explain or understand it because it is a confusing doctrine based upon man made creeds and not Scripture.

Add this the silly and inane ways preachers try to explain the trinity. Common expressions are: “the trinity is like water, ice and steam, different but the same.” Try this one: “it is like cherry pie, top crust, bottom crust and filling.” Or (Lord forgive us) “it is like an egg, the shell the white and the yoke” The common expression “God the Father, God the son and God the Holy Spirit” is nowhere found in Scripture and Jesus never in anyway indicated that he was God. He did confess to being the Son of God (John 10:36) but usually used the expression “son of man.” The “glass” of God’s revelation of Himself has been filled and cannot be improved upon. When Paul states: “It was the Father’s good pleasure that all the fullness dwell in Him” and “In him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form” (Col. 1:19, 2:9), he was saying that it is in Christ all that God wants us to know about Him is revealed. No council or creed can add to that.

When God created man in the beginning he was the image of God (Gen. 1:26, 27). The phrase “image of God” is used three times in these verses, and once again in Genesis 9:6. Man in the image of God is not mentioned again until in the New Testament we read that Christ was the image of God: “Christ, who is the image of God” (II Cor. 4:4); “And he (Christ) is the image of the invisible God” (Col. 1:15); and Romans 8:29 states that the Christian is “predestined to become conformed to the image of His son.” We can relate the *image* of God to the *fullness* of God and conclude that since the sin of Adam no man had experienced the fullness of God until “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself” (II Cor. 5:19). Jesus, then, the last Adam (I Cor. 15:45) was the only man since Adam to experience the fullness of God, and just as God was “pleased” with His creation declaring it “very good” “it was the Father’s good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in him” (Col.1:19).

On the basis of this “fullness” many have concluded that Jesus had to be a “God-man” and not one that was “made like his brethren in all things.” (Heb. 2:17) and thus adding to the fullness of God by making Jesus the second person of a “triune” God. They are trying to fill a glass that is already full. To borrow a quote from *Living Waters Newsletter*, Feb. 2015: “He was not a man born of an earthly father but a man who was ‘begotten by the Holy Spirit’ (Matt. 1:16, 20) and called ‘the son of God’ (Luke 1:35), yet a man ‘made like his brethren in all things’ (Heb. 2:17). Jesus referred to himself as a man (John 8:40), Peter declares he was a man (Acts 2:22) and Paul stated ‘There is one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Jesus Christ’ (I Tim. 2:5), showing Jesus is still a man. A glorified man whom we ‘shall be like’ (I John 3:2). The Scripture nowhere says that Jesus is God. He is always referred to as ‘the son of God.’” Jesus, as a man, did the many miracles and signs because “It was the Father’s good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in him” (Col 1:19). He healed the sick, cast out demons, fed the multitudes, walked on water, raised the dead and many other miracles. He did none of his mighty works because he was God. However we are told how he was able to do them: Acts 10:31: “You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how he went about doing good, and healing all who were depressed by the devil for God was with him.” Jesus himself tells us the source of his power: Luke 4:18: “The spirit of the Lord is upon me because He anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recover of sight to the blind, to set free those who are downtrodden, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.” This is the fullness of God dwelling in him.

To see the context of the fullness of God in Colossians, Paul is combating the false teaching that proposed to make us more spiritual by recourse to food and drink, to seasons and holy days and to strange forms of worship (2:16-18). If union with the crucified and risen Christ is the foundation of our spirituality then a Christian cannot attempt to find spirituality in human schemes that say “do not handle, do not taste, and do not touch! (which all refer to things destined to perish with the using) -- in accordance with the commandments of men. These matters which have to be sure the appearance of wisdom and self-made religion, and self-abasement and severe treatment to the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence” (2:20-23). Too many churches and religious leaders make demands upon people that God has not made.