

# Sound Doctrine

Once we agree that the focus of Jesus, John the Baptist, Paul and the early church Apostles was The Kingdom of God, and then accept that their message was The Gospel of The Kingdom, what follows is: "What on earth do we believe now?"

Doctrinally we have: the doctrines of the Old Testament; the doctrines of Jesus; the doctrines of the apostles; the doctrines of the church and; the doctrines of denominations. So what doctrines (teachings) are appropriate for operating in The Kingdom?

Unfortunately, it's very easy to fall back on what we already know ('the tyranny of the unknown' factor) rather than moving forward into what King Jesus wants us to know and believe. Both what's new and what we've lost - for which he's been waiting 2,000 years for us to regain.

The identification of the appropriate doctrines to adhere to in the Kingdom is a huge topic – too large to be covered fully in this talk. We must make a start, and begin somewhere.

**Doctrine** in the New Testament means ‘teachings’ or ‘instructions’ from the Greek word *didaskalia*. Teachings can be truth, half-truth, error or amusing anecdotes. Doctrines, however, are what we believe are truth, and therefore what we adhere to. We inculcate these doctrines into our natural and spiritual lives. In some way, they define who we are.

There are similar words to this:

- **Dogma:** An authoritative principle, belief, or statement of ideas or opinion, especially one considered to be absolutely true – usually, regardless of evidence, or without evidence to support it.
- **Tenet:** An opinion, doctrine, or principle held as being true by a person or especially by an organization.

Paul encourages Timothy and Titus in his letters to them to adhere to ‘sound’ doctrine. ‘Sound’ translated from the Greek word *hugiainō* meaning to be well, in good health. Doctrinally it infers that a person’s beliefs be uncorrupted, free from error or mixture. When referring to the qualities of an elder in the church, Paul directs that he must teach others sound doctrine and refute false doctrine:

**Titus 1:9** (NIV) – *He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.*

So what is ‘sound doctrine’, because Paul instructs Titus to teach it?

**Titus 2:1** (NIV) – *You, however, must teach what is appropriate to sound doctrine*

In Paul’s letter to Timothy, he describes unsound doctrine. This is teaching that people chase after because they desire to hear nice words.

**2 Timothy 4:3** (NIV) – *For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.*

Paul also gives some examples of what unsound doctrine would contain.<sup>1</sup> It would approve of, support and lead to:

- lawlessness
- unruliness
- ungodliness
- sinfulness
- reverence
- profanity
- assault
- murder
- homosexuality
- prostitution
- fornication & adultery
- lying
- perjury
- kidnapping
- enslavement

### TEST EXAMPLES

Here are some doctrines of the church that would be considered by the majority of believers to be incontrovertible truths. Let's see if there is any solid evidence that these doctrines are worthy of acceptance.

#### **(1) Water Baptism**

We've already seen from Frank Viola's audio teaching file "The Gospel of the Kingdom"<sup>2</sup> that baptism in the 1<sup>st</sup> church was carried out immediately on conversion. There was no period of time following conversion for the convert to undergo discipleship training before they were baptized.

Frank explains:

"In baptism, a person is saying, "I have many allegiances. And now I'm about to die. There will be no more me. It is not that I'm going to change and give up my associations. I may keep some of them for the sake of the gospel. But I will no longer pay allegiance to them. I am through. I am finished. So take me out to this watery graveyard and bury me. For I now belong to a new king and His kingdom. And I'm at His service to do what He wants me to do."

The most amazing thing about all of this is that those who have died in Christ tend to rise from the dead.

So the one who is baptized is buried, yet made alive into a new creation – one that's broken into the old creation. The baptized person has become a citizen of the true Israel, the new nation called *ekklesia*. And its headquarters are in the heavenly realm.

That's how the early Christians understood baptism. It was an ending. A burial. And when you came up out of that water, you understood that your past was gone, forgiven, and you were now part of a new nation, a new people, a new kingdom.

Properly understood, then, baptism is a funeral service."<sup>3</sup>

For a fuller investigation into this topic read Frank Viola's online document "Rethinking Water Baptism"<sup>4</sup>.

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1 - **1 Timothy 1:10** (NIV) – *...and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine*

2 - <http://ptmin.podbean.com/2014/01/27/the-gospel-of-the-kingdom>

3 - Frank Viola (2014) "Rethinking Water Baptism" (<http://frankviola.org/2012/09/20/waterbaptism>)

4 - <http://frankviola.org/2012/09/20/waterbaptism>

## (2) The Trinity

Can we really understand the doctrine of the Trinity? No. It is labelled, “A mystery”.

So why do we believe in this doctrine? Because it is a church doctrine! So what?

We must be able to justify why we believe the doctrine of the Trinity.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit are only mentioned together as a collective in one scripture in the whole bible:

**Matthew 28:19** (NKJV) – *Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*

Galatians mentions them in the same sentence, but there is no equality of their being in the statement.

**Galatians 4:6** (NKJV) – *Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.”*

So why do we have the **doctrine** of the Trinity? Skip Moen explains:

“Perhaps the single distinguishing doctrine of Christianity is the Trinity. No other monotheistic religion embraces this claim, i.e. that God exists as three persons in one being. In fact, until the fourth century, those who claimed to be Christian (not necessarily followers of the Jewish Messiah) didn’t embrace this view. The doctrine arose through the Council of Nicaea, convened by Emperor Constantine, but was not finally constructed until the Second Ecumenical Council convened by Theodosius in 381 CE. Since then it has been viewed as an *essential* theological proclamation of the Christian Church. The fact that Jewish sages and rabbis never came to this conclusion in spite of dedication to the same Hebraic Scriptures seems irrelevant, although obviously quite perplexing, since the justification of the doctrine is based primarily on New Testament implications and a re-reading of the Tanakh *through the lens* of a Trinitarian view of the apostolic writings.

But there are a few problems. In fact, there are some fairly significant problems since all admit that there is *no definitive explicit Scriptural statement* of the idea of the Trinity. The doctrine must be inferred from hints in the text, read according to *a priori* conclusions. Unlike other significant teachings of the Bible (e.g., God’s sovereignty, Yeshua’s role as Messiah and grace for forgiveness), this “fundamental” doctrine of the Church depends on theological inference.

Therefore, when we examine the idea of the Trinity, we are not examining clear and explicit verses in its support. We are examining verses that could be read as support if one already decides to read the verses according to the doctrine. And this brings up a serious exegetical issue.”<sup>5</sup>

An example of this is 1 John 5:7:

**1 John 5:7** (NKJV) – *For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the*

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5 - Skip Moen (2014) “The Trinity: First Considerations” <http://skipmoen.com/2014/05/31/the-trinity-first-considerations/comment-page-1/>

Holy Spirit; and these three are one.

The underlined section of this text is found only in late manuscripts – i.e. it's in the KJV & NKJV but not modern versions which use a different Greek manuscript to translate from.

If you adhere to the Trinitarian view you will accept the KJV & NKJV and reject the others. If you're non-Trinitarian, you'll only accept the modern translations

This should now become a continuing issue for us – to find out whether we should believe this doctrine or not. The Christadelphians refer to this doctrine as polytheism and refuse to believe it because God describes himself in the Old Testament as 'one God'.

### A STARTING POINT

We need a starting point so we can begin to amass sound doctrine. So let's look at the possible sources we could use.

**(i) Doctrines of Jesus:** A good start would be to adopt the doctrines that Jesus held to, those he taught his disciples.

If we do this we must eliminate from what he said and did that was pre-New Covenant. We must eliminate all that relate to the fact that he was a Jew and Jewish culture and religion had certain requirements that needed to be fulfilled – e.g. celebrating Passover and other feasts; meeting in synagogues; ritual washings; etc.

A suitable set of starting doctrines would be his commands as he told his disciples to teach new converts all that he had commanded them.<sup>6</sup>

Out of the Gospels can be drawn a list of 50 commands or directives or recommendations that Jesus taught. This list and the source in the Gospels is found in my document "50 Commands of Jesus – summary".

**(ii) Doctrines of the Apostles:** Another good place to begin would be to adopt the doctrines that the apostles taught, because they were the ones that Jesus gave the task of raising the first church and teaching them. The first church did this so we would do well to do the same.

**Acts 2:42** (NKJV) – *And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

Unfortunately, these teachings are not all perfectly clear from the New Testament because of the translation from the Hebrew mind to the written and Greek and then into the written English. Also, like Jesus' teaching the Jewish culture must be removed to find the essence of what sound doctrine ought to be.

Also, the teachings we have in the Bible are only a small percentage of all that the apostles taught. Most of their teaching was oral, and of the many, many letters they would have written to the dispersed church, only a handful have been collected into the Bible.

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6 - Matthew 28:20

**(iii) Doctrines of the First Church:** Although the first church followed the teachings of the original Apostles, they were not limited to that. They had the Old Testament and what the Apostles were taught by Jesus during his 3-year training program for them.

We think the first church built their doctrines entirely on the teachings of Jesus – that’s not the case. The early church had the initial foundations of the teachings of Jesus, but their teachings were based on what the Holy Spirit taught them through the original Apostles, then through the apostles and prophets that were in the eldership of the local communities. They were mystical people. They were not religious people who followed doctrines in a book. They listened to the Spirit, and they flowed with the Spirit, and they tested the things of the Spirit, and what was right and wholesome and felt good through the Holy Spirit in them, they adopted. And that became the teachings of the very early church.

**(iv) Doctrines from Scripture:** Bible-believing Christians justify their doctrines from the bible. There is a directives in the epistles that the Old Testament is suitable as a source of doctrine.<sup>7</sup>

However, you can justify almost any doctrine from scripture. The array of Christian cults attests to this.

- The right of Papal succession is justified from scripture.<sup>8</sup>
- As is trans-substantiation.<sup>9</sup>

There is also the difficulty in understanding what the writers of the scriptures were really trying to convey. This is exemplified in many scriptures which are translated into English differently. If we make any scriptures into doctrine, can we be sure that it is a doctrine representing TRUTH, or false because we a believing what a translator has written. Here are some examples of verses that create this confusion:

**1 Corinthians 2:16** (NKJV) – *For “who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?” But we have the mind of Christ.*

**1 Corinthians 2:16** (JUB<sup>10</sup>) – *For who has known the understanding of the Lord? Who has instructed him? But we have the understanding of Christ.*

**1 Corinthians 16:13** (NKJV) – *Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong.*

**1 Corinthians 16:13** (CEB<sup>11</sup>) – *Stay awake, stand firm in your faith, be brave, be strong.*

**Psalms 138:2d** (NKJV) – *For You have magnified Your word above all Your name.*

**Psalms 138:2d** (ESV<sup>12</sup>) – *for you have exalted above all things your name and your word*

**Galatians 2:20b** (KJV) – *and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*

**Galatians 2:20b** (NIV) – *The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

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7 - 2 Timothy 3:16

8 - Matthew 16:18

9 - Matthew 26:26

10 - Jubilee Bible 2000

11 - Common English Bible

12 - English Standard Version

**Matthew 28:19** (NKJV) – *Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,*

**Matthew 28:19** (AMP) – *Go then and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,*

**Ephesians 4:13a** (NKJV) – *till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God,*

**Ephesians 4:13a** (NIV) – *until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature*

For more in the topic of bible translations, see my documents:

- “The Problem with Bible Translations”
- “More Mistranslations”

**(v) Doctrines from the Spirit:** Jesus said he was ‘The Truth’, so we should find our doctrines in him and get them from him. His truth will come to us personally and corporately via Holy Spirit. Jesus directed us in this way when he said to his disciples that Holy Spirit would teach them (us) all things<sup>13</sup>. This is because it is the Spirit’s job to focus on Jesus and bring us *rhema* words from him – he communicates to us through the Spirit.

**NOTE:** There was no New Testament for the first church, only oral teachings and the letters from the Apostles. They received their teaching

So our job is to seek from King Jesus what we are supposed to believe. He will advise us via his Spirit, but our job is to discern and test what we receive. As a guide to our process of filtering, the source of Kingdom doctrine is teaching that encapsulates the heart and the mind of God. This can only come through the Spirit.

*This is only a starting point for Kingdom people to consider. The real job starts NOW.*

See also this document to get the idea that we need to think clearly about what we believe:

- “Should Christians Fall in Love”<sup>14</sup>

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13 - John 14:26

14 - Frank Viola (<http://frankviola.org/2013/12/04/shouldchristiansfallinlove>)