



Volume 11 Issue 7

West Suffolk Baptist Church West Suffolk Epistle



July 2024

Thoughtfully Reformed - Redemptively Relevant

5 Things You Should Know about the Doctrine of the Trinity

1. The doctrine of the Trinity is one of the most fundamental doctrines in Christianity.

The Christian doctrine of God is the doctrine of the Trinity, and the Christian doctrine of God is foundational to every other Christian doctrine. There is no doctrine of Scripture (bibliology) apart from the doctrine of God because Scripture is the *Word of God*. Human beings are created in the image *of God*. Sin is rebellion against the law *of God*. Soteriology is the doctrine having to do with the redemptive work *of God*. The church is the people *of God*. Eschatology has to do with the final goals and plans *of God*.

2. The doctrine of the Trinity was not invented at the Council of Nicaea.

There is a popular myth today that the doctrine of the Trinity was invented in the fourth century at the Council of Nicaea. This is not true. In the first centuries of the church, Christians were already teaching the fundamental doctrines they found in Scripture. Scripture teaches that there is one—and only one—God. Scripture also teaches that the Father is God. Scripture teaches that the Son is God and that the Holy Spirit is God. Furthermore, Scripture teaches that the Father is not the Son or the Spirit, that the Son is not the Father or the Spirit, and that the Spirit is not the Father or the Son. Anybody who held these basic propositions of Scripture held to the foundations of the doctrine of the Trinity. Over the centuries, there arose those whose teaching denied or distorted one or more of those biblical teachings. The Council of Nicaea was called to respond to one such teaching—the teaching of Arius, who had denied that the Son is God. The Nicene Creed provided boundaries to ensure that the church teaches everything Scripture affirms.

3. The doctrine of the Trinity is not fully comprehensible to human minds.

The doctrine of the Trinity, along with the doctrine of the incarnation, is one of the great mysteries of the Christian faith. This means that it exceeds the ability of finite human minds to fully grasp. If we treat the doctrine of the Trinity like some kind of math puzzle, requiring only the right amount of ingenuity to solve, we will inevitably fall into one heresy or another. The doctrine of the Trinity is not a Rubik's Cube. There is nothing in creation that is a precise analogy to the doctrine of the Trinity.

4. Most popular Trinitarian analogies are misleading at best and heretical at worst.

Because there is nothing in creation that is a precise analogy to the doctrine of the Trinity, most popular Trinitarian analogies are misleading at best and heretical at worst. Most end up suggesting that the three persons of the Trinity are three parts of God (e.g., the clover analogy; or the egg shell, yolk, and egg white analogy), or that they are three modes or roles of a unitarian God (e.g., the Father, Son, and Spirit “masks”; or the water, ice, and steam analogies). At best, some analogies are perhaps able to illustrate a certain aspect of the doctrine of the Trinity, but they all tend to deny one or more elements of biblical teaching.



West Suffolk Baptist Church West Suffolk Epistle



5 Things You Should Know about the Doctrine of the Trinity

Continued from Page 1

5. Misunderstandings regarding who Jesus is tend to lead to misunderstandings of the doctrine of the Trinity.

In the incarnation, the Second Person of the Trinity, the Son, assumed a human nature, which is united to the divine nature. The human nature includes His body and His soul. This means that the Lord Jesus Christ is God-incarnate. He is one Person with two natures, and those two natures are united in the one Person of the Son without confusion, change, division, or separation. Since both natures are *His* natures, everything that is true of either nature is said of Him, the one Lord Jesus Christ. However, some things are said of Him according to His divine nature (e.g., being the Creator of the world) and others are said of Him according to His human nature (e.g., getting hungry or thirsty). If we confuse the divine and human natures of Christ, it will easily distort our doctrine of the Trinity, because we will read human attributes into God. For example, the Bible teaches that God is immortal (1 Timothy 6:15–16). In other words, God cannot die. But don't we believe that Jesus is God? And didn't Jesus die on the cross? Yes, He did, and He did so according to His human nature. A human can die. A human can suffer. A human can change. Jesus did all of these in His human nature, but we can't transfer those human attributes into the divine nature. The divine nature cannot die or change or suffer. Similarly, Christ perfectly submitted His *human* will to the divine will of God, but that doesn't mean that the divine will of the Son was submitted to the divine will of the Father. Why not? Because there is only one divine will. The Son's divine will is the same divine will as that of the Father because the Son is God just as the Father is God. To use the language of the Nicene Creed, the Son is *homoousios* with the Father. If the Son's divine will is submitted to the Father's divine will, we no longer have the Trinity. We have polytheism. ~ *Dr. Keith A. Mathison - Professor of systematic theology at Reformation Bible College in Sanford, Fla.*

Unclean: Leviticus and Total Depravity

The word unclean is used more than one hundred times in Leviticus 11–15. It is an apt description of the condition of the people; they were morally unclean because of their failure to obey God's commands. The law of Moses was issued, first and foremost, to reveal the holiness of God. The Ten Commandments, as well as the ceremonial and civil laws, were designed to keep God's people distinct from the surrounding idolatrous nations. These laws made a clear distinction between what was clean and unclean. But Israel could not keep these laws perfectly. As a result, the people were spiritually unclean, each and every one of them:

For I am the Lord your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. You shall not defile yourselves with any swarming thing that crawls on the ground. For I am the Lord who brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy." This is the law about beast and bird and every living creature that moves through the waters and every creature that swarms on the ground, to make a distinction between the unclean and the clean and between the living creature that may be eaten and the living creature that may not be eaten. (Leviticus 11:44–47)

In this representative text, God called His people to be holy, separated from all that is unclean (Leviticus 19:2; Leviticus 20:7, 26). Through dietary laws and religious rituals, God was teaching them the necessity of being set apart from the defilements of the world.



West Suffolk Baptist Church

West Suffolk Epistle



Unclean: Leviticus and Total Depravity

Continued from Page 2

MacArthur comments, “Sacrifices, rituals, diet, and even clothing and cooking are all carefully ordered by God to teach them that they are to live differently from everyone else. This is to be an external illustration for the separation from sin in their hearts.” But no one could keep these laws and regulations perfectly; to break one point of the law was to be guilty of it all (James 2:10). The law was a continual reminder to the Israelites of their uncleanness as they stood before their holy God. Every part of the divine law was an indictment of their sinfulness. Thus, the law testified to their moral separation from God. ~ **Dr. Steven J. Lawson - Founder and President of OnePassion Ministries in Dallas.**

Awaiting His Return

There is a widespread fascination with the end of the world. Throughout history, we have witnessed the bold assertions of soothsayers, naysayers, and doomsdayers. Every day, self-proclaimed prophets of the end times make whimsical predictions about the future. Claiming to have biblical authority, they tout their cleverly devised schemes about the end of the world as we know it, and by reading between the lines of the Old Testament prophetic books, they carefully contort the words of sacred Scripture to fit their fictional fantasies about the second advent of Christ.

Christians throughout the world have become so enamored with some obscure aspect about the second advent of Christ that they construct their entire systems of doctrine upon what might happen—not upon what has happened. We are, indeed, called to live with eager expectation of the second advent of Christ, but we should only do so in light of the first advent of Christ. In remembrance of Christ’s first advent, it is not enough simply to wish Jesus a happy birthday. In fact, to do so borders on blasphemy. Instead, we are called to remember and to celebrate the incarnation of the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, the eternal Logos.

At the first advent of Jesus Christ, the fullness of time had come and God sent forth His Son into this fallen world. As the prophets foretold, He was born of a virgin who was richly blessed of God. He was born under the law of God, not to abolish the Law but to fulfill it. As was necessary to redeem those under the Law, He fulfilled the righteous demands of the Law and took upon Himself the sins of His people, His sheep for whom He laid down His life.

As His people, we confess that Christ shall come again to judge the quick and the dead. We believe He will return to this world not as a babe in a manger but as the King of all the earth, in power and glory to manifest His reign over the new heavens and the new earth.

We confess His return because of what He taught us at His first advent and on account of the hope that is within us. For this reason, during the wonderful Advent season that comes each year, we should eagerly await the second advent of Christ as we celebrate the first advent of Christ. Nevertheless, let us always be mindful that although Christmas day comes only once a year, we are called to remember and celebrate the eternal work of Christ—past, present, and future—each day of our lives *coram Deo*, before the face of God. ~ **Dr. Burk Parsons - Senior Pastor of Saint Andrew’s Chapel in Sanford, Fla., chief editorial officer for Ligonier Ministries, editor of Tabletalk magazine, and a Ligonier Ministries teaching fellow**



West Suffolk Baptist Church West Suffolk Epistle



Living under Authority

As I read the Scriptures, particularly the New Testament, there is a theme that recurs again and again regarding the Christian's willingness to be in submission to various types of authority. Given the rebellious spirit of our age, that frightens me. It's all too easy for us to get caught up in an attitude that will bring us into open defiance of the authority of God.

Let's turn our attention to 1 Peter 2:11–16:

Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.

Peter is speaking to people who were subjected to brutal, fierce, and violent persecution—the kind of activity that can incite within us the worst possible responses, including anger, resentment, and hatred. But Peter pleads with those people who were the victims of the hatred of their culture to behave in an honorable manner before the watching world. Paul gives a similar plea time and time again that we're to try to live at peace with all men as much as possible.

The “therefore” of verse 13 introduces a key manifestation of living honorably before the watching world. We're to submit ourselves to the ordinances of man. Why? I find the answer startling and fascinating. The Apostle's admonition is that we're to submit for the Lord's sake. But how is obedience to human ordinances done for the Lord's sake? How does my obedience to my professors, my boss, or the government in any way benefit Christ?

To understand this, we have to understand the deeper problem that all of Scripture is dealing with—the problem of sin. At the most fundamental level, sin is an act of rebellion and disobedience to a higher law and Lawgiver. The biggest problem with the world is lawlessness. The reason people are violated, killed, and maimed in battle, the reason there are murders, robberies, and so forth is that we're lawless. We disobey, first of all, the law of God. The root problem in all of creation is disobedience to law, defiance of authority. And the ultimate authority of the universe is God Himself.

But God delegates authority as He reigns and rules over His creation. God raises up human governments. It is God who instituted government in the first place (Romans 13). That's why Christians are called to honor and pray for the king, pay their taxes, and submit as much as possible to the authorities in all things—because the authorities are instituted by God. Moreover, He shares supreme authority with Christ, who said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given [by the Father] to me” (Matthew 28:18).



West Suffolk Baptist Church West Suffolk Epistle



Living under Authority *Continued from Page 4*

So, no ruler in this world has any authority except that which has been delegated to him by God and by His Christ, who is the King of kings and Lord of lords. Thus, disobedience to the lawful commands of earthly authorities is ultimately disobedience to God and to Christ because they ordained the governing authorities.

The world has gone crazy in lawlessness, but we're to be different. Wherever we find ourselves under authority—and we all find ourselves submitting to various authorities—we're to submit to that authority. Nobody in this world is autonomous. Every one of us has not just one boss, but several bosses. Everyone I know, including me, is accountable not to just one person but to all kinds of authority structures. Throw a brick through a store window, and you'll find out quickly that you're accountable, that you're under authority, that there are laws to be obeyed and law enforcement officers to make sure the laws are obeyed.

Christians are free in Christ, but we aren't to use our liberty as a license for sin, because even though on the one hand we're free, on the other hand we remain indentured servants.

We're bondservants to God. We're slaves of Jesus Christ. So, even if the rest of the world is running on the track of anti-authority and anti-submissiveness, we aren't allowed to join in. We're called to be scrupulous to maintain order. There is such a thing as law and order that God Himself has ordained in the universe. And we're called to bear witness to that, even by suffering through uncomfortable, inconvenient, and sometimes painful submission to the lawful rules of even those authorities who do not recognize God, for even the godless authorities have been established by God.

I think we all have experiences where we bristle and chafe under authority and under mandates with which we vehemently disagree. Let me just suggest as a matter of practical consideration that if we look to these human institutions or these human persons who are tyrannical, unfair, unjust, and all that, and we seek to submit to them individually or even institutionally, considered in and of themselves, we will find it extremely difficult to submit with any kind of good attitude. But if somehow we can look through them, look past them, look over them, and see the One whom the Father has invested with ultimate cosmic authority, namely, Christ Himself, we'll have an easier time submitting. We'll find help with our struggle to submit when we recognize we're submitting ultimately to Christ, because we know He'll never tyrannize or abuse us. ~ *Dr. R.C. Sproul, Sr.*

A Prayer for the Ages

It is hard to overstate the importance of the Lord's Prayer. Throughout church history, new converts and children have been disciplined chiefly in three areas: the Apostles' Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the Lord's Prayer. For most of the last two millennia, it was assumed that if you were a Christian, you knew, memorized, and frequently prayed the Lord's Prayer.

In one sense, John 17 is more precisely the Lord's Prayer. It is the longest recorded prayer in Scripture from the Lord Jesus. What we know as the Lord's Prayer is not the prayer Jesus prayed (at least not exactly—how could he say, "Forgive us our debts"?), but the prayer he taught his disciples to pray.



West Suffolk Baptist Church West Suffolk Epistle



A Prayer for the Ages *Continued from Page 5*

There are two versions of the Lord's Prayer, one in Luke and the more familiar one in Matthew. I don't think one prayer is dependent upon the other. A simpler explanation is that Jesus, like any itinerant preacher, taught on the same things over and over, with different words and in slightly different ways.

In Luke 11:1–2 Jesus's teaching is prompted by the disciples' request, "Lord, teach us to pray" (v. 1). They must have heard something in the way Jesus was praying that made them think, "We have a lot to learn." Notice what Jesus did not talk about in response to their request. He didn't teach them how long their prayers should be, or at what time of day they should pray, or how many times each day they should pray, or what they should feel as they pray, or whether they should be standing or sitting or kneeling, or if they should close their eyes and fold their hands, or whether they should lift their hands and eyes to heaven.

It's not that concern about those things is wrong. But surely it's instructive that Jesus was most concerned with what they prayed, more than with when or where or for how long. This may be the most obvious and most important lesson to learn from Jesus about prayer. We can pray in the morning or in the evening, for a long time or a short time, with eyes open or eyes shut. There is freedom in a great many elements of prayer. But (1) we must not neglect praying, and (2) we must pray for the sort of things Jesus tells us to pray for.

The passage in Matthew 6:5–9 is part of Jesus's famous Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7). You've probably realized that before. What you may not have noticed is that this section in the Sermon on the Mount covers the three foundational acts of Jewish piety: almsgiving ((6:1–4), prayer (6:5–15), and fasting ((6:16–18). These were the "spiritual disciplines" for first-century Jews (they would have memorized much of the Bible, but most couldn't read it daily because much of the population was illiterate, and individual families did not have Scripture scrolls in their homes). If they made New Year's resolutions back then, they would have thought of giving to the poor, praying, and fasting.

Unlike Jesus's teaching in Luke, here in Matthew Jesus is concerned not just with the what of prayer but with the how of prayer. Specifically, Jesus wants to make sure we are praying for the right reasons from the right heart. In fact, that is his central concern in discussing all three acts of piety. When you give to the needy, don't make a big deal out of it. When you pray, don't do it to look good. And when you fast, don't draw attention to yourself. Jesus understands the pride and vanity that dwell in every human heart. Being religious doesn't mean you no longer seek vainglory. In fact, being religious is one of the chief ways in almost every culture that men and women find ways to nurture their pride and their vanity. What better way to look impressive before others than to be spiritually impressive?

So don't think for a moment, "Well, I'm a Christian, I go to church, and I'm spiritual and religious. I'm not in danger of these things." Actually those realities may mean we are in particular danger. ~ *Kevin DeYoung*



West Suffolk Baptist Church West Suffolk Epistle



We Are Uniquely Made

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion.... And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.... And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. — Genesis 1:26, 28; 2:15

Truly, we are uniquely made. God has given us dominion, or vice-regency, over all creation. God has created us for this purpose (Genesis 1:26, 28).

Man was created to be a caretaker of God’s creation, to exercise dominion over it in subjection and submission to God. We must understand the total picture of creation here. Man does not suddenly appear on the scene and assume dominion over creation. He is under the dominion of God; he therefore exercises dominion he has been given by God.

So there are two levels of dominion: God rules over all, including humanity; and humanity rules over the rest of the created order. God created man to rule over all the resources of the earth to reflect His own wise and perfect rule over man.

This rule includes delegation, for God gives dominion to man. The rule also includes reflection, for God’s perfect government is reflected in man’s rule over creation. God offered man enormous responsibility when He made him vice-regent over the created order.

Many tasks derive from this role, such as protecting and caring for the environment. We are responsible for managing all the resources in the world. Therefore, selfish spoiling of the environment, including failing to explore the world in which God has set us or ignoring scientific research about dominion over our resources, is contrary to God’s will. God commands man to subdue the earth and bring it under his dominion. No biblical believer should be afraid of scientific inquiry that is made in subjection to the Word of God.

Those of us who are called to science should be grateful to God for the privilege of serving in this sphere as you bring both yourself and your vocation into subjection to God. Then, too, all of us, no matter what our line of work is, should bring ourselves and our vocation into subjection to God. How can we do that on a daily basis? Do you prayerfully and conscientiously strive for this? ~ *Dr. Joel R. Beeke*

Louisiana Law requiring the Posting of the Ten Commandments **June 20, 2024**

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) — Louisiana has become the first state to require that the Ten Commandments be displayed in every public school classroom, the latest move from a GOP-dominated Legislature pushing a conservative agenda under a new governor.

The legislation that Republican Gov. Jeff Landry signed into law on Wednesday requires a poster-sized display of the Ten Commandments in “large, easily readable font” in all public classrooms, from kindergarten to state-funded universities.

“If you want to respect the rule of law, you’ve got to start from the original lawgiver, which was Moses” who got the commandments from God, Landry said.



West Suffolk Baptist Church West Suffolk Epistle



Louisiana Law requiring the Posting of the Ten Commandments

June 20, 2024

Continued from Page 7

Opponents questioned the law’s constitutionality and vowed to challenge it in court. Proponents said the measure is not solely religious, but that it has historical significance. In the language of the law, the Ten Commandments are “foundational documents of our state and national government.”

The posters, which will be paired with a four-paragraph “context statement” describing how the Ten Commandments were a prominent part of American public education for almost three centuries,” must be in place in classrooms by the start of 2025.

Under the law, state funds will not be used to implement the mandate. The posters would be paid for through donations.

The law also “authorizes” but does not require the display of other items in K-12 public schools, including: The Mayflower Compact, which was signed by religious pilgrims aboard the Mayflower in 1620 and is often referred to as America’s “First Constitution”; the Declaration of Independence; and the Northwest Ordinance, which established a government in the Northwest Territory — in the present day Midwest — and created a pathway for admitting new states to the Union.

Not long after the governor signed the bill into law at Our Lady of Fatima Catholic School in Lafayette on Wednesday, civil rights groups and organizations that want to keep religion out of government promised to file a lawsuit challenging it.

The law prevents students from getting an equal education and will keep children who have different beliefs from feeling safe at school, the American Civil Liberties Union, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, and the Freedom from Religion Foundation said in a joint statement Wednesday afternoon.

“Even among those who may believe in some version of the Ten Commandments, the particular text that they adhere to can differ by religious denomination or tradition. The government should not be taking sides in this theological debate,” the groups said.

The controversial law, in a state ensconced in the Bible Belt, comes during a new era of conservative leadership in Louisiana under Landry, who replaced two-term Democratic Gov. John Bel Edwards in January. The GOP holds a supermajority in the Legislature, and Republicans hold every statewide elected position, paving the way for lawmakers to push through a conservative agenda.

Similar bills requiring the Ten Commandments be displayed in classrooms have been proposed in other states including Texas, Oklahoma and Utah. However, with threats of legal battles over the constitutionality of such measures, no state besides Louisiana has succeeded in making the bills law.

Legal battles over the display of the Ten Commandments in classrooms are not new.

In 1980, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that a similar Kentucky law was unconstitutional and violated the establishment clause of the U.S. Constitution, which says Congress can “make no law respecting an establishment of religion.” The high court found that the law had no secular purpose but rather served a plainly religious purpose.
~ *Associated Press - Reporter Jeffrey Collins in Columbia, South Carolina, contributed.*



West Suffolk Baptist Church

West Suffolk Epistle



Thoughtfully Reformed - Redemptively Relevant

If you have a birthday or anniversary in July that is not posted here or is listed in error or you do not want to be published in this newsletter, please contact Walt or e-mail him at gwlclfl0415@gmail.com.

Birthdays and Anniversaries Corner July 2024

Birthdays

Sadie H. (13)
Elijah D. (16)
Teresa H. (21)

Emily L. (25)
Nic G. (29)

Anniversaries

David and Jennifer A. (4)
Les and Jessica T. (17)

What is God after with the Ninth Commandment? The Heidelberg Catechism gives a useful summary:

That I never give false testimony against anyone, twist no one's words, not gossip or slander, nor join in condemning anyone rashly or without a hearing. Rather, in court and everywhere else, I should avoid lying and deceit of every kind; these are the very devices the devil uses, and they would call down on me God's intense wrath. I should love the truth, speak it candidly, and openly acknowledge it. And I should do what I can to guard and advance my neighbor's good name. ~ Heidelberg Catechism - Answer 112

The ninth commandment is about more than not lying. It is, as Jesus summarized, about loving your neighbor as yourself. If someone was twisting your words and sullyng your reputation, wouldn't you want someone else to say, "Hold on a second. I know him. I'm not sure if you have all the facts right"? Or, "I know her. Let me give you a different perspective here." Wouldn't you want a neighbor to defend your reputation? ~ **Kevin DeYoung**



West Suffolk Baptist Church Leadership

The West Suffolk Epistle is a monthly publication of West Suffolk Baptist Church.

Office: 1001 Kenyon Court, Suffolk, VA 23435

E-Mail: pastorscofield@gmail.com

Website: <https://www.graceforsuffolk.org>

Phone/Fax: 757-539-0363

Teaching Pastor/Elder: Pastor Ben Scofield (Front Center)

Teaching Elders: Scott Thomas (L) and Mike Prince (R)

Deacons: Marlin Halsey, John McPhatter and John Hurst (L to R)

Editor: Walt Lawrence, gwlclfl0415@gmail.com/757-619-3268

Please submit information to the editor by the second Sunday of each month preceding publication by e-mail, in person or at the church office. The editor reserves the right to edit for content or space. May the Father be glorified in every word.

Disclaimer: The views and opinions from the contributors to this newsletter do not necessarily reflect those of West Suffolk Baptist Church or it's leadership.