

Threefold Cord of Apostolic Identity – Oneness

Ecclesiastes 4:12 And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

The gospel of John is unique among the four gospels. Matthew shows the Jews that Jesus is their Messiah; Mark shows the Romans that Jesus is the suffering servant; Luke shows the Greeks that Jesus is the perfect man. Matthew starts with a genealogy, Mark and Luke begin with the ministry of John the Baptist. But John, who writes some 60 years after the birth of the New Testament church, starts differently ...

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

John 1:14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

From his opening sentence, John is on a mission to prove that Jesus Christ is exactly who He said He was – the True and Only God in a body of flesh. 90% of John's gospel is unique. There are no parables in John. John is very selective about the miracles he records – some are unique only to him, such as the raising of Lazarus – and the ones he does record are twinned with Jesus' teaching. Only in John does Jesus talk at such length about His identity. And that's why John is the only gospel writer who intentionally records the "I Am" statements of Jesus: **I am** the bread of life, **I am** the light of the world, **I am** the door, **I am** the good shepherd, **I am** the resurrection and the life, **I am** the way, the truth and the life. It's invisible in English versions of the Scriptures, but obvious in the ancient languages – "Ego Eimi." A carpenter from Nazareth was using the ancient name of God revealed to Moses at the burning bush – "I AM THAT I AM" – and he was using it casually to refer to himself!

Theologians and denominations today may have missed it, but the Pharisees caught the meaning all too well (John 8) – that's why they took up stones to stone Jesus, and finally orchestrated His crucifixion!

- Before Abraham was, **I AM**
- If ye believe not that **I AM**, ye shall die in your sins
- When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that **I AM**

He spoke His name – His rightful name – at a well, and a nameless woman's life was changed forever; He spoke His name during a storm, and a disciple named Peter was empowered to walk on the raging waves; He spoke His name in a garden at midnight, and an entire battalion of soldiers fell to the ground like so much cordwood.

I AM THAT I AM or I AM – The original form spoken to Moses by God Himself, carrying in it the concepts of being Eternal and Self-Existent, a being who is Omnipotent, Omnipresent, and Omniscient.

YHWH or YAHWEH – This name comes from four consonants (YOD, HEH, VAV, HEH) in Hebrew, and is called the TETRAGRAMMATON. Because ancient Hebrew was written only in consonants, those who read it aloud had to supply the vowel sounds. To actually translate this name into English, we would say, "The Eternal." And in the English language, we would use the consonants **JHVH** or pronounce **JEHOVAH**.

Leviticus 24:16 And he that blasphemeth the name of the LORD, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him: as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name of the LORD, shall be put to death.

The Jews, after returning from the Babylonian captivity (450 BC) began to reverence the name "Yahweh" so greatly that they outlawed the very use of it, first for the common people, later for the priests. Finally, only the high priest was allowed to say it, and then only on the Day of Atonement. When Simon, who was the last high priest permitted to use it, died in 270 BC, a total prohibition against saying the name came into force among the Jews. "Adonai" became the substitute word.

ADONAI or ADON – This was a Hebrew word meaning "Lord," used as a substitute for YHWH. When it was read, the Jewish congregation would reply "HA SHEM" or "THE NAME." This eventually became the only way the Jews would refer to the proper name of God.

BY THE TIME OF JESUS' EARTHLY MINISTRY, THE JEWS HAD NOT HEARD THE PROPER NAME (YHWH) OF THE GOD THEY WERE SERVING FOR OVER 300 YEARS!

That is why John's gospel is so striking! Suddenly, a carpenter from Nazareth is casually using the proper name of God – the name they have not been allowed to say for over 300 years – to describe Himself! **But Jesus had a right to use God's name because HE WAS GOD!** The Jewish religious leaders were outraged – they understood who Jesus was claiming to be, even if some modern theologians do not!

Isaiah 44:6 I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God.

Isaiah 44:8 Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any.

Isaiah 44:24 I am the LORD that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself;

Isaiah 45:5 I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me

Isaiah 45:18 I am the LORD; and there is none else.

Isaiah 45:22 For I am God, and there is none else.

When you worship Jesus' name, you invoke all of the power of every covenant name of God in the Old Testament! And when Jesus uses "I AM" He is not using a pronoun and a verb – He is reaching back into covenant, into the greatest moment of revelation in Israel's history!

John 8:28 Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that **I AM** [he] ... something specific is going to happen at the crucifixion that will prove My divinity, so watch for it!

The Hebrew "code" which is obscured in English was painfully obvious to the Jewish religious leaders every time Jesus spoke! The phrase "I Am" (Greek: "Ego Eimi"), appearing to us as just another pronoun and verb, identified Him to them as YAHWEH! And this becomes exponentially more important at the crucifixion!

Much Old Testament poetic literature was written in what might be called CODED form; this made it easier to memorize. In Psalm 119, each of the 22 sections is labeled by one letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and each of the 8 verses in that section starts with that letter. In Lamentations, each of the chapters is a poem with a similar "acrostic" pattern.

To put it bluntly, the Jewish scholars missed absolutely nothing – not even the finest detail – in regard to the Holy Scriptures. It is absolutely astonishing that they could know so much about God's divine arrangement and completely miss God's divine atonement! One of the "details" that the Jews were absolutely fanatical about was the name of God. But when God came in flesh using His name they crucified Him!

Leviticus 21:10 And he that is the high priest among his brethren, upon whose head the anointing oil was poured, and that is consecrated to put on the garments, shall not uncover his head, nor rend his clothes;

Mark 14:61-64 But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, **I am**: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What need we any further witnesses? Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death.

AT THIS MOMENT THE HIGH PRIESTHOOD PASSES TO JESUS!

Hebrews 4:14-16 Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our

infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Hebrews 9:11-14 But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

Jesus has enraged the Sanhedrin repeatedly by using the unutterable name of God, but this time He has done it in a court of law. They rush their prisoner to Pilate and demand that He be crucified. Even though Pilate is seemingly impressed with Jesus, they force him to carry out the execution through political pressure. Pilate is powerless to save the Nazarene, even though he wants to.

John 19:19-22 And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS. This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin. Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews. Pilate answered, What I have written I have written.

In an unusual move, Pilate himself writes an inscription and has it placed on the cross of Jesus. In three languages (Hebrew, Greek and Latin) it says: "**Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.**" Just another epitaph to the Greeks and Romans. But as "many of the Jews" begin to gather and read the inscription over this Galileean, the Chief Priests suddenly see that they have a problem. They rush to Pilate insisting, "Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews." Pilate's firm answer is, "What I have written I have written." Literally, he says, "What I have written, I will not change one bit!" What was the problem that so upset these scholars of the Law?

Written over Jesus' head in Hebrew was, "**Yeshua HaNazarei v-Melech HaYehudim.**" But to the Jewish leaders, the "Bible Code Experts," all they could see was the pattern of a condemning acrostic, as the first letter of each word (YOD, HEH, VAV, HEH) unerringly spelled out "**YHWH**" for all to see! **It was not a carpenter's blood that was being shed that day, but Yahweh's blood!**

HaYehudim	v Melech	HaNazarei	Yeshua
יְהוּדִים	וּמֶלֶךְ	הַנַּצְרִי	יֵשׁוּעַ
ה	ו	ה	י
H	W	H	Y

Acts 20:28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. Even after their enemy was dead, the Chief Priests are still nervous! In Matthew's account, they come to Pilate demanding Roman guards to secure the tomb until after the third day (Matthew 27:62-66). Pilate tells them to use their own guards, and once again makes a puzzling remark – "Go your way, make it as sure as you can." Could he possibly guess how pointless their efforts will be? It's as if he is saying, "Do your best to keep Him in the grave, but if THAT MAN said He's going to rise from the dead, He's going to rise from the dead!

John 20:11-12 But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.

In that tomb on Easter Sunday morning, Mary saw the most familiar silhouette in all of Judaism – only in one other place do we find two angels facing each other over a flat slab. That place was the Mercy Set on top of the Ark of the Covenant, and between those angels dwelt the Shekinah presence of God. The body of Jesus was able to come out of the tomb because that body contained the Shekinah presence of God!

Exodus 25:19-22 *And make one cherub on the one end, and the other cherub on the other end: even of the mercy seat shall ye make the cherubims on the two ends thereof. And the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubims be. And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.*

John's gospel culminates with the inspired revelation of doubting Thomas in chapter 20 – when Thomas realized the significance of a mortal wound in the body of a living man, he immediately put a title of respect (KYRIOS – "SIR, MASTER") together with the absolute title of Deity (THEOS – "SUPREME DIVINITY"), exclaiming, "My Lord and my God!" in John 20:28. **The New Testament Apostolics never used "KYRIOS" after this to address anyone except Jesus.**

John 20:28-29 And Thomas answered and said unto him, **My Lord and my God**. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

Thomas, there is a group of people who never walked with Me in the flesh, but they will walk with Me in the Spirit. And though they have never seen Me, they will have the very same revelation that you received!

John 20:30-31 And many other **signs** truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might **believe** that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have **life** through his name.

THE END ... OR IS IT?!

Chapter 21 is really a mere postscript, adding the account of just one event. What could be so crucial to add after such a powerful conclusion?

John 21:1-6 After these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise shewed he himself. There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples. Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing. But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No. And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.

John 21:11 Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken.

Luke 5:6 And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake.

It's obvious from the gospels that fishing, boats, nets, fishermen, fish, etc. are all significant terms and types. Seven out of the twelve disciples are fishermen! Jesus is the one who says, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19). But Jesus is not the first to use that term. Greek and Roman philosophers used it to describe the work of the man who seeks to "catch" others by teaching and persuasion. And that is what we are supposed to do with the revelation we have received!

John is not wasting ink in chapter 21. He is letting us know that after receiving such a powerful revelation, the disciples settled back into the "status quo" and decided to go fishing. There is nothing wrong with fishing, except they are supposed to be fishing for MEN now!

What happens if most life-changing message to ever intersect human history gets buried beneath the status quo? It almost happened to the disciples ... but a resurrected Jesus forced them out of their comfort zone. They had been fishing all night, but they had caught absolutely

nothing. They had quit hoping, and had settled down to accept the status quo. But the methods that had always seemed adequate in the good old days were now coming up empty. No fish!

And now, Jesus calls to them from the shore, asking the question that irritates: Are you catching anything? Is it working? Reluctantly, they admit failure: No, it's not working. Then comes the even-more-irritating command from the shore: **Change your method – cast your nets on the other side! Don't change your net – use the same net, but cast it into a new place!**

The greatest danger is always at the edge (where the church meets the culture). But so is the greatest opportunity for rescue and redemption. The New Testament church lived “on the edge” – never safe, always one step from disaster if God didn't intervene! Jude felt the tension:

Jude 1:22-24 And of some have compassion, making a difference: **And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire**; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh. **Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling**, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,

The problem with living on the edge is that some people try to push you over and other people try to pull you back. It's dangerous on the edge – people actually fall off the edge from time to time!

There is absolutely no chance for the church to impact our culture unless we get on the edge! Almost all of the growth in any church comes from the edge, because the trend is for Christians to disconnect from unsaved people the longer they are around church.

That's not the way Jesus – the friend of sinners – did it. That's not the way Paul – all things to all men – did it. They were not isolationists! They engaged their culture!

Matthew 11:19 The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children.

1 Corinthians 9:22 To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.

It's not enough to get to the end of chapter 20 and celebrate the revelation we've received. We have to enter into chapter 21 and take the same net we've been given to catch fish and cast it into new waters!

Missionary C.T. Studd said, “Some want to live within the sound of Church or Chapel bell; I want to run a rescue shop within a yard of hell. That's the spirit of Jude, of Paul, of Jesus, of the New Testament church! **And if you have that spirit you are going to be soundly criticized!** God wants to give us a two-fold miracle. He wants us to get ready for new methods, new approaches, new people. Cast your nets on the other side! The first miracle will be that the nets will be overflowing with fish! The second miracle is equally important – God is going to supernaturally strengthen the same nets we've always used so they won't break!

The second thing John records in chapter 21 is Jesus' conversation with Peter (“lovest thou me?”), and we don't have to guess why Jesus engaged in this conversation. John is not just wasting ink here!

John 21:18-22 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me. Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.

Peter will very shortly find out that preaching and serving Jesus can result in persecution, and he will eventually find out that serving Jesus can result in death! And he has the same objection that all of us have ... “Jesus, I'll do it for You if everyone else does it – WHAT ABOUT HIM?” And this really does have something to do with the revelation of ONE GOD – because if you've really given yourself to Him totally then your life belongs to Him, regardless of what He allows anyone else to do!

In ancient Israel, during a time of civil war, the Gileadites set up a blockade to catch the Ephraimites, who were fleeing after a defeat. The sentries simply asked each person who wanted to pass to say the word “shibboleth.” The Ephraimites, who had no “sh” sound in their language, pronounced the word “shibboleth” and were caught and slaughtered.

Judges 12:5-6 And the Gileadites took the passages of Jordan before the Ephraimites: and it was so, that when those Ephraimites which were escaped said, Let me go over; that the men of Gilead said unto him, Art thou an Ephraimite? If he said, Nay; Then said they unto him, Say now Shibboleth: and he said Sibboleth: for he could not frame to pronounce it right. Then they took him, and slew him at the passages of Jordan: and there fell at that time of the Ephraimites forty and two thousand.

Did you know that the word “shibboleth” means “harvest”? Did you know that everyone doesn't say “harvest” the same way? Different churches and different pastors have different ideas about how to get the job done.

That's okay, as long as the church doesn't have a civil war over it.

I am not called to reach your city, I am called to reach my city!

Furthermore, I am not called to reach your generation, I am called to reach my generation! And the METHOD we need to use to accomplish that monumental task may be totally different! **BUT SO WHAT IF IT IS?!**

Today, a shibboleth refers to any "in-crowd" jargon, customs, or shared experiences that distinguish the group. For example, people about the same age who are from the same nation tend to have the same memories, priorities, likes and dislikes as others who shared their formative years. IT'S NORMAL TO SEE THINGS DIFFERENTLY – BUT IF IT'S JUST “METHOD” LET'S NOT HAVE A CIVIL WAR OVER IT!

The Gospel of John was written to the CHURCH – this is OUR gospel! But after his powerful conclusion, John wanted us to remember two important things: (1) Go home and find some new waters to throw your net of revelation into, and watch Him do a miracle! (2) Stop worrying about what God is doing, what He is allowing, or how He is blessing someone else – just follow Him yourself with your whole heart, regardless of the consequences!