

through the rift

And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but the one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. (Luke 12:10)

Theologians go on and on about Trinity until they're blue in the face. Most of their Trinitarian treatises resemble botched dissections.

But rest assured that even a theologian can't sever the Trinity. That's because the Trinity is a unity, held together by the strongest bond in the cosmos:

love

Here's the essential verse in scripture for the understanding of Trinity:

God is love. (1 John 4:8, 16)

There had to be Trinity--throughout the eternal past, before anything else was--because God is love and you can't love nothing! Thus, Trinity.

Love is a verb that has to have an object. You cannot say, "I love." An object has to complete the thought: I love Jesus, I love Shelley, I love dogs and I love Skittles. So, since God is love, Trinity is a logical inevitability.

The Bible contains a few fleeting glimpses of the sweet relationships within the Trinity. We see them cover for one another, protect one another, promote one another, submit to one another. They are perhaps the dearest and sweetest moments in the Book:

Jesus Christ told the Pharisees--who attributed his healing power not to the Holy Spirit but to Beelzebub, "lord of the flies"--that you could drag his own name through the dirt and maybe live to tell about it. But should you blaspheme the Holy Ghost, you've punched your own ticket to hell:

And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but the one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. (Luke 12:10; see also Matthew 12:22-32)

The **Father** set up the entire universe--all dominions and realms of both the spiritual and physical dimensions--in order that all glory be given to the Son.

The **Holy Spirit** never shines a light on himself, but seeks a bride for another. He is the unnamed servant in Genesis 24, who goes forth in order to procure a bride for the Son of Promise.

Jesus Christ is in absolute submission to the will of the Father. He won't do or say anything unless he sees or hears it first from his Father. (John 5:19, 7:16; 8:28, 12:49, 50; Deuteronomy 18:18)

They **each** scramble in a mad rush for the last seat at the table, so the other will not have to sit there.

The greatest anguish of the cross was not physical. Others have suffered to the physical extent that Jesus did. His greatest suffering was a spiritual agony, when sin rent the Trinity asunder:
My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

No man but Jesus has entered into that realm of suffering. But all of the Trinity--you'd swear they share one heart--entered through the rift into a dimension of pain so intense that it may have rendered Jesus' physical suffering moot.

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### **one way or another**

*I came to cast fire on the earth, and would that it were already kindled! I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished!* (Luke 12:49-50)

Twice a year, our church has a baptism service. (The next one is on May 15; if you can find your way to Lockport, NY I will be glad to get you wetter than wet!) Those are my favorite services of the year. Weddings, baby dedications, and even funerals usually don't stir me like baptisms do. So call me, and save the date!

But even if you don't call me, even if you aren't particularly interested, even if you don't believe in Jesus, you are still going to be baptized, one way or another.

One way or another.

John the Baptist put it this way:

*"I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."* (Luke 3:16)

Jesus said it this way:

*"I came to cast fire on the earth, and would that it were already kindled! I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished!"* (Luke 12:49-50)

The old-time churches placed great importance on their methods of baptism. They could argue into the night about immersion or sprinkling or pouring.

I don't want to step on any denominational toes, but the Bible doesn't see much difference between the various means of water baptism. So go ahead and get dunked, doused, inundated, deluged, hosed, sprayed, sprinkled--or all of the above. All of those methods are indicative of the inner baptism in the Holy Spirit.

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**The crucial choice is between Spirit baptism and fire baptism.** Spirit baptism is to be identified / immersed with God's grace and forgiveness. Fire baptism is to be identified / immersed with God's judgment of sin.

And the only way to avoid fire baptism is to trust that Jesus underwent the baptism of fire for you! Your sins are going through fire, one way or another. They can be borne by Jesus in your stead, or they can remain on your ledger.

So remember: Everybody's going to get baptized,

one way or another,

whether we know it or not; whether we like it or not.

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guilty of being God

"Woman, you are set free from your infirmity." Then he put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God. Indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, the synagogue ruler said to the people, "There are six days for work. So come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath." Luke 13:12-14

Q. What put Jesus on the cross?

A. In a general sense, it was "enmity," the inherent hatred that evil has for good:

"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." (Genesis 3:15)

But in a specific sense, the one thing--more than any other--that put Jesus on the cross was healing.

Q. Healing?

A. Yes, healing on the Sabbath. The Pharisees were looking for any excuse to string him up, so they seized on Sabbath-breaking.

Q. He was crucified for healing? Isn't that ironic?

A. I would say so! But life, and scripture, abounds with irony. Sometimes there seems to be more irony than not.

Q. Did Jesus actually break the Sabbath laws?

A. No. Jesus broke the Pharisees' interpretation of Sabbath law, but he did not transgress the law of God. The picky, fussy, anal, self-serving Pharisaic interpretation of the Sabbath laws would not permit such "work" on the Sabbath. But Jesus clarified God's law for them:

Then the Lord answered him, "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger and lead it away to water it? And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?" As he said these things, all his adversaries were put to shame, and all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by him. (Luke 13:15-17)

Q. Do churches today perpetuate any 'picky, fussy, anal, self-serving interpretations'?

A. Indeed we do. For an example, you won't have to look any further than yesterday's blog, which pointed out the false choices presented by our baptismal traditions. Whether or not to sprinkle, pour, or immerse has obscured the real choice to be made--between the baptism of fire or the baptism of the Spirit. Our traditions have buried baptism's meaning--which is intended to point to the meaning of the cross itself. We are buried under an avalanche of traditions and flawed interpretations that have compounded over time, leaving us--in ways we aren't even aware of--blind and cold beneath the drifts.

Between the lines of today's passage lies one of the most radical and seminal of all scriptural concepts:

God doesn't keep the law; he IS the law.

Embedded within God's covenant name (I AM THAT I AM) is this startling reality: God doesn't correspond to a standard known as "right." Instead, "right" corresponds to whatever God IS.

These are far-reaching concepts, so we'll boil it all down:

Jesus was nailed to the cross because he was **guilty of being God** (1).

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(1) see John 5:18