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Misc. Teachings, Feast of Dedication (Part 2)



The Life and Teachings of Christ - Steve Gregg

In this teaching, Steve Gregg discusses various topics related to Jesus and the Father, the Trinity, miracles, and the meaning of Psalm 82. He suggests that people may have a wrong mental picture of Jesus and the Father as separate beings, and that it is not necessary for salvation to understand the Trinity. He also explains the meaning of Psalm 82, which mentions "gods" who are actually human magistrates acting as representatives of God. Gregg encourages careful interpretation of scripture and thoughtful consideration of theological doctrines.

Transcript

Verses 7-10. John 14, 7-10 says, Jesus said to his disciples, if you had known me, you would have known my Father also. And from now on you know him and have seen him.

They've seen the Father? Really? Philip said to him, Lord, show us the Father and it's sufficient for us. And Jesus said to him, have I been with you so long and yet you have not known me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father. So how can you say show us the Father? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me? There it is again.

Jesus is in the Father and the Father is in him. The words that I speak to you, I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does the works. Now there is no doubt some mystery involved in our understanding of how Jesus and the Father are one.

The Trinity is a very perplexing mystery. And I don't feel that we need to really sort it all out. But one thing we do need to do is not give it less meaning than the Bible does.

I don't know in exactly what sense Jesus and the Father are one, but I know this much. That when the Jews said you are making yourself God, they were essentially right. That's what he was doing.

I mean, he didn't make himself God, but his statement was claiming to be God. He was God. They didn't get that wrong.

Because it's essentially what he said to Philip. If you've seen me, you've seen the Father. Now, if he was not saying that I am the Father, then what in the world is the sense of his saying it? After all, Isaiah said in Isaiah 9, 6, Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given.

And his name should be called Wonderful Counselor, the Everlasting Father, the Mighty God, the Prince of Peace. That the Messiah would be the Everlasting Father in human form is predicted in Isaiah 9, 6. And for Jesus to say, listen, Jesus in those verses in chapter 14 of John, verse 7, he said, From now on you have seen him. Well, what was he referring to? The fact that they had seen Jesus.

But he said, From now on you've seen the Father. And he explains, In me, you've seen the Father. Now, Philip said, Show us the Father and that'll be enough for us.

And he says, How can you ask that question? Well, frankly, if Jesus was not the Father, I can easily imagine that question. But Jesus said, Have I been this long with you and you haven't known me? This perplexity on Jesus' part, this question on Jesus' part, would make no sense unless he was implying, Hey, what do you mean? There's nothing more the Father to see than what you've already seen. Haven't you picked that up yet? If you've seen me, you've seen the Father.

And it's in that context that he says, The Father is in me. I'm in my Father. He says that also here in John 10.

His unity with the Father, his identity with the Father is somehow connected to him being in the Father and his Father in him. Now, we do, of course, I'm sure every evangelical, every Protestant, even every Catholic probably has struggled with the question, In what sense are Jesus and the Father one? How are we to understand the Trinity? And the most common mental picture that we get is the picture of a committee of three, you know, a father and a son and someone else, and maybe some nebulous spirit-like being sitting around and conversing among themselves. And then when we correct ourselves, Wait a minute, wait a minute, God isn't three gods, he's one God.

Then maybe we make him a three-headed God. You know, I mean, a three-headed being. That's what the Jehovah's Witnesses accuse us of doing.

Although I really don't know any real Christian who pictures God as a three-headed person. It's more like three persons that somehow by some mangling of the language, we call them one. And the only way we can do that, we have to say, Well, I guess maybe it's like a committee, you know.

But that's not really right. I mean, I'm not sure that anyone has really described God as a committee of three, but that's sort of the mental image I think a lot of Christians get. Perhaps we're getting the wrong mental picture.

After all, the Bible doesn't give us that particular imagery. Jesus says the Father is in me, and I'm in the Father. When I was younger, I used to puzzle over that because I thought, Well, how can one thing be in another and yet the second thing is in the first thing too.

It's like, you know, I can imagine taking a small can and sticking it inside a larger can. But I can't have both cans inside each other at the same time. That's really the mental picture I always used to get.

Two containers of different sizes. You can put one inside the other, but you can't have them both inside each other at the same time. It's impossible.

I thought, well, there's the mystery. But maybe it's not quite that picture. Maybe it's more like lemonade.

I hate to use something like that because it's so, I mean, I don't want to be sacrilegious. I'm just trying to give an image that may be a little more realistic. What is lemonade? It's water and lemon juice and sugar.

I've never heard this illustration given, and I probably will regret giving it. But when you have added these ingredients and they're mixed in a way that they can never again be separated, is it not true that the lemon juice is in the water and the water is in the lemon juice and the sugar is in the lemon juice and the sugar is in the water and the water is in the sugar? I mean, isn't that, can't they all be in each other in that particular way of looking at things? Now, I'm not trying to picture God as a liquid or anything like that. I mean, what I'm trying to say is that, by the way, some might say, well, it's more biblical to think of God as three people, like a father and a son and some other guy sitting there.

It's more biblical to use that image than water or lemonade or something like that. Really? I'm not sure that that's true. The Bible does talk about the Holy Spirit as living water and God says, I will be to them like rivers of water.

I'll be to them like streams in the desert. I'll be to them like broad rivers and so forth. I mean, it seems to me like the imagery of liquid and the imagery of three people or of a family or something like that, these are all just images that are probably metaphorical, all of them.

I mean, God is not a liquid. God is not three guys. God is probably something that defies comparison with anything we know.

God is known to us not so much by mental images, but by his dealings and by his character and by his nature. And it's interesting that God never really steps out to explain in ways that give us clear mental images exactly what the Godhead is like. You know, I mean, we got a mixture of different kinds of metaphors and images.

Like I say, the one that sticks in our evangelical mind probably because of the way that

the Nicene Creed formulated the Trinity Doctrine. You know, we think of three guys. In fact, the Trinity Doctrine specifically says three persons.

Maybe that's a good description. Maybe it's not. The Bible doesn't use that exact word persons, but it could be.

It's really hard to know. That's the problem. We don't know for sure which image is the best.

And maybe the fact that God hasn't given us one definitive image is because he never wanted us to make images. Do you remember when Moses was on Mount Sinai, God said to him or afterwards? No, it was not that. It was in Deuteronomy.

At the end of their wilderness wanderings, Moses said to the Israelites, remember when we were at Mount Sinai, you saw no image or likeness of God there. Therefore, don't try to make any graven images or likenesses of God. He used this as an argument against making idols.

God didn't show you any appearance of himself. And the reason he didn't is because he didn't want you to try to recreate that appearance in stone or in wood. Because he doesn't want to be worshipped by those images.

Let me tell you, we don't probably have any temptation to go out and carve a piece of wood into an idol and worship it and say, this is God. But we might make imaginary images in our mind that serve just as much as an artificial replacement for God himself. I mean, it's not really something we've carved, but it's just as imaginary.

It's just as much a product of our own sculpting, our own fabricating an image of God. And I suspect that God has deliberately avoided giving any graphic pictures of himself in the Bible so that we might know him not for our mental images of what we think he might look like when we finally see him, but so that we would know him for his character and his dealings and those things. He's a spirit.

And sure, in Revelation, John sees someone sitting on a throne and a lamb and so forth, but that's just another case of new images being brought up. You can use those ones or some others, there's many others in the Bible. What we have is such a conflict of images.

None of them contradict each other, but all of them would warn us off saying, here's the definitive image of what God is like. But we do know this, God is just, God is merciful, God is holy, God is righteous, God is eternal. And those things are declared to be true about God.

In fact, when Moses said, God, let me see your glory. You know what God did instead? He said, I'll declare my name to you. I'll tell you what I'm like.

I'm God full of mercy and compassion. I'm God who does not pardon the wicked, that, you know, et cetera, et cetera. He, when Moses asked to see God, God said, well, I'll show you my hinder parts.

We didn't really show him as far as we can tell anything visible. He just declared his traits to him. So maybe there's again a clue that we get a little bit too curious, more curious than we're entitled about.

Well, how do we explain the train? How does that really work? Not sure that's necessary. But I guess what I'm saying is to picture Jesus is in God and God is in him and so forth. To me, I guess the idea of a mixture of liquid ingredients kind of, kind of satisfies that particular statement a little better than, than that of, you know, canisters of different sizes or something.

That doesn't work quite as well. Jenny? Absolutely. Absolutely.

He is the object of worship in the book of Revelation, the lamb. And he, he, him that sits on the throne and the lamb combined are mentioned as objects of worship frequently in the book of Revelation. Well, here's the thing.

We can't very well avoid having, well, let me put it this way. We could avoid having any image of Christ in our mind as far as what he looked like. But that wouldn't be necessary because he really did look like something and he didn't hide what he looked like.

I mean, in the generation that saw him, he was not shy about letting them see what he looked like and so forth. But of course, our problem is we don't know what he looked like. So any picture we might make or even in our imagination of what we think he might have looked like would not be what he really looked like.

But I think his body and his physical appearance was simply a veil. You know, he was, the glory of God was veiled in human flesh. And I don't think that the veil is the object of worship so much.

It's not his face. It's not those blue eyes, you know, or whatever that we're attracted to. It's God in him, you know.

And so I would hope that pictures of Jesus would never become objects of worship because in the pictures, the most they could depict is his physical body, which is just the veil, which he lived behind, you know. And our attraction to Christ is not on the basis of anything, a physical imagination of what he may have looked like, but on the base of his work and his character and things like that. So of course, some people did see him and no doubt could not erase the memory of his appearance from their minds after he was gone.

Therefore, there must be nothing particularly evil about remembering or even imagining

what Jesus looked like. That's a little bit different because his body, the only part that would have a visible image was really not the part of him that was divine. His body was really human.

The question is, did God choose to come in human form because of our weaknesses and our need to be able to relate to him man to man? Probably. I think so. Yeah, I think our weakness is such that we can't relate very well to things that we have no visual image of.

And we do relate to other humans. So probably that was part of his reason, if not the entire reason. There's probably other theological reasons for him coming as a man too.

Tim? I'm trying to explain to you before Jesus was going to die on the cross and he was talking about two different wills. Yeah, that is a good point. In fact, I bring that up with the Jehovah's Witnesses that if they're saying that Jesus' will and the Father's will were one and that's all he meant in John 10, 31, he said, I am my father, one, then why is it that he and his father had conflicting wills? Because Jesus' will, as he made it very clear in his prayer in Gethsemane, was to avoid the cross.

But he realized that his father's will was for him to go to the cross. Therefore, he said, well, don't do what I want. Do what you want.

That's what it means, not my will that yours be done. Do what you want, not what I want. Which means I want something different than what you want, but I'll surrender to yours because I'm submissive to you.

You know, I mean, it's clear that he was not one with his father in terms of preference in that particular situation. But he was one in essence of some sort and that's what we don't fully understand. Now, how do I explain the training of people? I don't.

I don't. I tell them that I believe that Jesus and the Father and the Holy Spirit are all God. There's only one God.

You sort it out. You know, or don't. Don't sort it out.

I don't. I haven't sorted it out myself. I've tried.

There were years in my life I tried. I thought, well, all this sorting resorts to extra biblical imagery, things the Bible does not endorse. You know, three leaf clovers, water in its three states, you know, the body, soul and spirit, nature of man, all these images.

The Bible doesn't appeal to any of them. Not one of them is found in the Bible as an image of, you know, understanding the Trinity. So I think, well, how can we trust any of them? You know, I think it might be better if God didn't give us the tools and the data to sort it all out.

Maybe he didn't care for us to sort it all out. If he wanted us to, he probably would have given us what we needed to do it. Yeah, Tim.

I am probably not in the majority of evangelicals in saying that I don't think a person's salvation rests in their grasp of the Trinity. Now, when I say I'm not in the majority, I know that, for instance, Walter Martin made that one of the principal tests of a cult as opposed to an Orthodox Christian group, that if they didn't share the Nicene Creed vision of the Trinity, that they were a cult. Therefore, people like, people like the Jesus-only's, United Pentecostal Church, they would be a cult.

By that definition, they don't share the Nicene description of the Trinity. Groups like Witness Lee's local church down in Anaheim, they would be also a cult because they have, they hold to modalism, which is the idea that the Father became the Son, then became the Holy Spirit, and there's only one person at any given time, that's not Trinitarianism. By the way, these various views have been held from earliest times.

They were called heresies eventually, but there were good, before the Trinity was formulated, before the doctrine of the Trinity was formulated at, you know, by Athanasius and some of these guys at the Nicene Council, there was no universal Trinity doctrine held among Christians. Everyone worked it out the best they could, and some came up with modalism, some came up with a Jesus-only kind of a deal, others came up with Arianism, and it was just a matter of time before some official statement had to be made by the Church about this, and the Nicene Council hammered it out, and what they came up with is our typical Orthodox doctrine of the Trinity. And there's nothing, I have no serious objection to it, I'm not an anti-Trinitarian, I believe in the Trinity myself.

But what I would say is, what was the state, the spirituality of those Christians before that Council? Before someone nailed down all these points, and before someone defined the Trinity in these terms, those three centuries that there were Christians who loved Jesus, and presumably went to heaven, but who had never figured out any particular way of describing the Trinity, and probably didn't have any clear picture of themselves. Some of them were modalists, some of them had different opinions. In my opinion, if the Trinity, if an understanding of the Trinity were necessary for salvation, we would have it, we would have some place in the Scripture that declares it, some place in the Scripture that would explain it.

So, I mean, I've told you this before, the Trinity doctrine is a product of deduction. There is no verse in the Bible that declares the Trinity doctrine, or that explains it in any sense. It is a deduction, and in my opinion, a correct one.

I believe in the Trinity, but I am not with those who say, well, if you don't believe in the Trinity as per the Nicene Creed, then you're not saved. Where does it say that in the Bible? Jesus always said, if they don't believe that He is, He said, if you don't believe that I am He, then you will die in your sins. He said, He that hears my words and believes in

Him has everlasting life.

So, hearing Jesus' words, believing that He is He, believing in God, obviously committing yourself to Christ as a disciple of His, those are the things that the Bible suggests to save a person. And if we start adding the more fine points of esoteric theology as necessities for salvation, we're going to have to exclude a lot of church fathers and a whole lot of generations of Christians who lived and died before these esoteric doctrines were nailed down in councils in the fourth century. So, what is the story? Now, someone might say, well, okay, before the Nicene Council came up with all this definition, then, of course, God would have to show compassion on those who died in ignorance because they didn't have this doctrine hammered out.

But afterwards, there's no excuse. Since the Nicene Council, everyone must believe in the Nicene description of the Trinity. Really? Well, that's only true if the Nicene description is the correct one.

I don't know of any evangelical Protestant who believes that all church councils came up with the right doctrines. What about the Council of Trent? What about those councils where they decided that Mary was conceived immaculately? What about those councils that decided on the infallibility of the Pope? Let's face it. Those councils were just additional parts of a long string of church councils from the very early stages.

We agree with some of them and disagree with others as Protestants. But who's to say the ones we agree with are infallible? Since we admit that some of the later ones were not. I'm saying that I have no problem with the doctrine of the Trinity as the Nicene Council put it.

And it's much safer as a Christian hoping to have the ear of other Christians to go ahead and just be uncritical of it. Because it is a basis of faith and orthodoxy in the minds of most Christians. I'm just saying in the Bible there's no evidence that a Trinity doctrine is at the foundation of any test of orthodoxy.

If it were, it seems like there'd be some mention of it in the Bible. And if it's not mentioned in the Bible, and you can only come up with it as a deduction from a many different texts, then I would say it doesn't seem to loom large among the essential things that people have to understand. Else God may seem a bit negligent in failing to reveal it to us.

Okay, so just so you understand what I'm saying, I believe in the Trinity. The Nicene description of the Trinity does not bother me. Therefore, I'm in the mainstream of evangelicals in that respect.

But where I may differ is that I do not see that such an understanding of the Trinity is anywhere declared in Scripture. Even can logically be argued to be a necessity for

salvation. That some people like modalists and some who have some other way of trying to describe the same deity, and they're doing their best, and they still acknowledge the deity of Christ, and they still acknowledge that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all God.

And if there's only one God, but they just have other ways of describing that. I don't see anywhere in the Bible where we can condemn such people and say, well, they are not orthodox. Not orthodox, maybe, as orthodoxy has been defined in the last 1,500 years.

But who's to say that Jesus defines orthodoxy as whatever's been most widely held since the 4th century. You know, I mean, orthodoxy is hearing Jesus' words and believing in Him that sent it. And that's having eternal life, Jesus said.

So we do have to believe in one God? Absolutely. If a person believes in more than one God, they're not following the God of Bible. So basically, like the Trinity, they're just not with that Bible.

There's some kind of Trinity you have to believe in. It's just, what I'm saying is the modalists. Let me give you this.

I'm not a modalist. I believe they're wrong. But it seems to me like they satisfy all the basic data to a certain extent, too.

Because they believe there's only one God. And they believe in the Old Testament, He was the Father. In the New Testament, He became the Son.

And when He ascended into heaven, He became the Holy Spirit. And that there never have been three persons at all, but just the one God has gone through different modes. That's why it's called modalism.

This view was around in the early centuries of the church, too. It was after the Diocesan Council was considered a heresy. And there are not very many people I'm aware of who hold it now, although there's at least one church called the local church, which in many respects is cultic.

But they are modalists. And I guess I wouldn't damn them on that basis. It sounds to me like they're trying to wrestle with the same material, same biblical concepts.

There's three persons, the three, you know, there's the Father is called God, the Son is called God, the Holy Spirit is called God, but there's only one God. How do you sort that out? Well, they sort it out one way. I sort it out a different way.

But since the Bible doesn't do the sorting for us, it just requires, you know, that the person with the best logical processes is more likely to come up with the right answer. But is it only the logical that are safe, you know, or is it those who love God and hold

their heart, soul, mind and strength and follow Jesus Christ? And, you know, those are the issues. Now, I realize that the Trinity may be an important issue, but I guess what I'm saying is I'm a little more flexible in my judgment of other people who have different views that are trying to work out the deal.

Now, I'm not flexible with people like Jehovah's Witnesses because they deny an essential point of Christianity, and that is the deity of Christ. Anybody who denies the deity of Christ not only is failing to grasp the Trinity correctly, they're failing to grasp who Jesus is altogether, and therefore they're not Christian. That's not a negotiable, in my opinion.

The deity of Christ is not negotiable for Orthodoxy. But individual visions of the Trinity, of the Godhead, those, it seems to me, there's got to be a little room for flexibility in people's understanding there because there just isn't a clear-cut black-and-white picture of how that works in the Bible. I'm a little more generous, I suppose, than some people are in my judgments of other people, but I have done a great deal of thinking about what is and what is not negotiable, at least in my opinion.

And the deity of Christ is not negotiable Specific theories about the Trinity are, to my mind, a bit hazy, you know, a bit negotiable. Okay, now verse 40, John 10, 40. And he went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where John was baptizing at first, and there he stayed.

Then many came to him and said, John performed no sign, but all things that John spoke of this man were true, and many believed in him there. Now, this is one respect in which John did not resemble Elijah. On other occasions, we've talked about the many ways in which John's ministry did resemble that of Elijah, but Elijah's ministry was full of miracles, and John didn't do any miracles.

Why, I wonder. I'm not sure. Elijah was not the only prophet to do miracles.

Of course, Moses did miracles. Joshua did miracles. I mean, because the sun distanced, I mean, God did it, but through him.

Elijah and Elisha both did miracles, and there are other cases. At the behest of Isaiah, the shadow went backwards 10 degrees in the days of Hezekiah, so the prophets of God sometimes did miracles, and John was said to be the greatest prophet of all, but he did no miracles. Why? Perhaps because it would have made confusion when Jesus was on the scene at the same time.

Maybe God chose not to raise... I mean, let's face it. Jesus appealed to his miracles, even in this passage in verse 38. Believe in my works, that you may know that I am he, and so forth.

Since Jesus used his own miracles as a basis for appealing to the evidence of his being,

in fact, the Messiah, it might have only muddied the waters if John was out there doing miracles as much as Elijah and Elisha were, because, for one thing, there wouldn't be a clear distinction in that case between John and Jesus in that particular respect. And it might have been simply not... not ideal for God's timing and plan to have John also be a miracle worker at the same time Jesus was out doing miracles. So, I don't know.

Maybe that's it. I don't know otherwise. One thing is important, though, is that John was one of the most successful Jewish prophets and revivalists in history.

Exceeded only by Jonah. The name John and Jonah are the same name, by the way. But Jonah, of course, saw the conversion of all of Nineveh.

John didn't see the conversion of everybody, but he certainly got the attention of the whole nation and had virtually all of them coming out to be baptized and confessing their sins. That's a lot more success than Isaiah ever had or any of the other major prophets or minor prophets, for that matter. John was a great prophet and he saw tremendous spiritual revival taking place through him, which is, of course, because of the anointing God had on him.

But the interesting thing is that anointing did not involve or necessitate that he worked miracles, which suggests that when people sometimes say, boy, if we just had more miracles happening, there'd be greater revival going on. That's not necessarily so. When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, that was one of his greatest miracles and the doubters didn't get converted from that.

In fact, they planned to kill Lazarus as well as Jesus to get rid of the evidence. Doing miracles doesn't guarantee people's conversion. And the absence of miracles doesn't guarantee that there won't be conversions.

John the Baptist was an extremely successful revivalist and yet he didn't do any miracles. So let's not be too hard on Baptist evangelists. Let's not be hard on guys like D.L. Moody or Billy Graham or people like that who don't espouse charismatic theology.

Without any miracles of those kinds, God has sometimes brought great fruit and another kind of miracle through them. And that's, of course, the greatest of all God's miracles is the transformation of the human being. Let's go.

Yes. In John 10? Oh, yes. I'm so glad you said that.

I intended to get back to it and then I got off on a sidetrack and then forgot I hadn't talked about it. Thank you so much. Okay.

John 10, 34 and 35. Now, they said they were going to stone him because he was making himself God. He didn't back away and say, no, I'm not.

But he rather said, what I have claimed shouldn't offend you. What I'm saying actually is, here's another case of your own inconsistency. He's pointing out, it's rather like when he said, you'll go out and loose your oxen on the Sabbath, why can't I loose this person on the Sabbath? Here he says, when he said elsewhere, you heard what David did and you don't criticize him, but why do you criticize my disciples for doing essentially the same thing? It's the same kind of argument.

You don't criticize the writers of your Psalms who use this kind of language, why do you criticize me for using this kind of language? Now, of course, he was not saying that he was using the language in exactly the same way that the Psalmist did. But he's saying, you guys, you're getting all bent out of shape because I happen to use a certain combination of words. Well, you've got even more inflammatory sounding words in your own scriptures and you don't get offended.

So why do you get offended at me? This is his basic argument. Let's look at what the argument, what's involved in it. He says in verse 84, is it not written in your law, I said you are gods.

Now, he said your law, but in fact, it's not found in the portion of the Old Testament that we normally call the law. It's found in Psalm 82, verse 6. Nonetheless, it was part of the Jewish scriptures. And it was, therefore, something they should have to acknowledge as from God and something unoffensive to them.

Now, New Agers and probably Mormons and others who speak of the deity or the potential deity of humans like to quote this passage as if Jesus was teaching that we are all gods. I've heard it time without number. I can't count them all.

When the New Agers said, well, didn't even Jesus himself say you are gods? No, he didn't say you are gods. He said it is written in the law, I said you are gods. Jesus was not telling his listeners who happened to be children of the devil by his own assessment in chapter 8 that they were gods.

He's talking to the Pharisees, talking to his critics. He's talking to people who are going to go to hell and he told them so. And he said, they're the children of the devil.

Are we suggesting that he was trying to tell them they are also gods and should begin to think of themselves as gods? The absurdity is one of the greatest that's ever been imposed on us. As a misunderstanding of Jesus' words. What he was saying is your own scriptures contain this statement.

The statement is, I said you are gods. Now, you don't find that offensive, do you? Well, then why do you find what I say offensive? Those people to whom the scriptures came were called gods in that passage. If you were there, would you take up stones to stone them because they were called gods? And here I've called myself the son of God.

In some respects, that even sounds less inflammatory than saying I'm god. I never did say I was god. Although, Jesus doesn't deny that he's god either.

Seems to affirm it in verse 38. But the point here is, he's diffusing a dangerous situation. They've got stones in their hands.

They're ready to hurl them at him. And it's not really his time to go. He'd rather just point out to them that they are once again showing their own inconsistency.

That is, the language he used, they are intolerant of. But they're quite tolerant of language that's of the exact same sort when it's found in their scriptures. So, why get so upset here? Well, let's look at the scripture itself and try to find out why it says those words in that scripture.

That's, of course, one of the other problems about it. Why does their scripture actually contain these words? I said, you are gods. What's that actually mean? Well, Psalm 82 is a psalm that is written to the judges of Israel, who happen to be quite corrupt at many times in Israel's history.

We can deduce from this psalm that they were pretty corrupt at the time it was written. It says, God stands in the congregation of the mighty. He judges among the gods.

And he says, how long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked? Defend the poor and the fatherless. Do justice to the afflicted and the needy. Deliver the poor and needy.

Free them from the hand of the wicked. They do not know, nor do they understand. They walk about in darkness.

All the foundations of the earth are unstable. I said, you are gods. And all of you are children of the Most High.

Now, notice, verse 1 says, he judges among the gods. And he speaks to them, he says, I said, you are gods. That's whoever he's talking about.

But who is he talking to? Well, it's quite obvious from verses 2 through 5, especially 2 and 3 and 4, that he's speaking to the magistrates of Israel. He's talking to the rulers. You're supposed to be doing justice.

You're supposed to be defending the fatherless. Stop doing injustice. Stop regarding the rich and disregarding the poor and stuff.

This is not something gods do. This is what judges do. He's talking to the judges of Israel.

The question, of course, arises, why does he call them gods? And that is a good question. But it probably is because they were, as judges of Israel, standing as gods'

representatives, and in that sense could be seen as little gods, not as objects of worship, but as little representations of God himself. There is a place in the Old Testament that there may be an allusion to here.

Whether I can find it quickly, because we don't have a cross-reference. Oh, I know how to find it, because Paul quotes this scripture. I can find it in Paul, then I can find it by looking up where he's quoting from.

In Acts 23. You don't have to turn to Acts 23, but that's where I'm going to find this Old Testament reference. Acts 22, 28.

Okay. Acts 22, 28 may give us a clue to what Psalm 82 is saying, why the word gods is used there. Acts 22, 28 says, You shall not revile God.

Actually, in the Hebrew it's Elohim, which can also be translated the gods, and the King James translates it the gods. The new King James has preferred to say, translate it God. Now, just a moment's digression.

You hopefully remember that the word Elohim is a plural word, but it's also used frequently as a name for God, perhaps suggesting the Trinity, but it's not certain whether that's why it's used for God. The only thing that is certain without question is that the very word Elohim, without any variation, sometimes refers to God singular, and sometimes to the gods, and it is as often or more often quoted. No, I shouldn't say as often, but very frequently in the Bible translated the gods.

When it talks about the gods of the heathen, it's the word Elohim. When it talks about Jehovah God, it's Elohim. God is Elohim.

That's the Hebrew word for it. And therefore, it can be translated, depending on the context, as God or as gods. Now, in this case, Exodus 22, 28, the King James translates it quite justly.

You shall not revile the gods, nor curse a ruler of your people. The new King James, showing the translator's own preferences here, changed the gods into God, but I personally think the gods is a better translation here, because I believe that this is a case of Jewish parallelism. Reviling the gods and cursing the ruler of your people are two ways of saying the same thing.

The rulers of Israel were the gods, with a little G, as it were. The little representations of God, and you're supposed to respect them. You're not supposed to revile them or curse them.

We're familiar enough with Jewish parallelism to, for you to understand what I'm, how I'm using this here, that the gods or Elohim in Exodus 22, 28 could be, and in my opinion, probably are a reference to the rulers of Israel. And that would explain why in Psalm 82,

verse 6, Jehovah speaking to the rulers and judges of Israel, says, I said you are gods. That is, he's referring back to Exodus, where the rulers of Israel were spoken of in those terms.

Yeah, it's true, I did say you were gods. I did use that term. But listen, don't let it go to your head.

Don't think for a moment that you are real gods, like I am God. You're not that kind of God. It makes that explicit in verse 7. Psalm 82, verse 7 says, But you shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes.

So, yeah, I said you were gods, but in fact, you're not gods. You're men, and you can die just like any other man. So, what he's saying is, while it is true that for some reason God did refer to the rulers of Israel on one occasion as gods, or two, if we include Psalm 82, verse 1, though he has spoken to them as gods, he doesn't want them to get the impression they are really gods in the true sense of that word, like God is God.

But rather, they are quite mortal after all. They'll die just like any other man. So, we might object to God even using the word gods to speak of the rulers of the people, but whether we object or not, he does.

I mean, that's something we can't avoid. He does. He does call them that, for whatever reason.

But he doesn't want them to think that in using that term, he is suggesting that they are deity. And that's just the point that the New Agers and Mormons want us to make from it. They want us to think that he is saying that we are deity.

But if you look at the passage in 82, Psalm 82, it's denying any deity to these so-called gods. They are just rulers of the people who have been, as a concession, referred to as gods, but they're not gods. They're people.

And Jesus simply quotes the passage because it does contain that word, gods, when referring to people. He says, now why don't you object to that like you object to what I say? Yeah, Jimmy? Well, it's good to be careful like you said. There are, as you probably know, there are Word of Faith teachers that encourage us to call ourselves gods.

They actually say we are little gods. I object to this because even if by some extension of the word god to mean those who will rule and reign with Christ someday, it is nonetheless misleading because that's not the normal way that the Bible uses the word god. It's true you might find one place or two conceivably, all together in the Old Testament where rulers were referred to as gods.

It is clearly not the normal way of using the word god in the Bible. And the gods usually means idols when it's not referring to the true God. So, you know, if a person said, well,

yeah, I told my congregation they were little gods, but I meant it in the same sense that Psalm 82 means it.

I'd say, well, that was pretty incautious of you because even Psalm 82 is hardly understood by Christians today. I mean, it's one of the more perplexing instances in the Bible where the word gods is used and it hardly seems like a typical or characteristic way of using the word. And, you know, if in fact you're using it exactly the way Psalm 82 did, then no one can fault you except that it's very injudicious because the word gods has a different meaning in almost all the rest of Scripture than it has in that Psalm, you know.

And so people, if you'd say they are gods, they're almost certainly going to understand it in the more common use of the word gods than in the special sense in which Psalm 82 is. So I'd say, you know, a person could kind of, you know, justify himself in using that terminology on the basis that that terminology was used in Psalm 82, but it's shaky, you know. I mean, it is shaky just because you usually use words the way they're understood by your listeners, you know.

And if I just stood here and said, folks, I want you to realize that you are gods. If I meant by that you are going to rule and reign with Christ, well, I should tell you so. And even if that's what I mean, and even if I intend to tell you so, it's better I don't even say you're gods.

Why should I even have to say that? I mean, it's not an emphasis in Scripture at all. It'd be safer to just say you are going to rule and reign with Christ and leave it at that rather than confuse the matter by introducing the idea of little gods. So that's what I think on that.

And you can be sure you're going to hear what I think around here. All right. Okay.

I thought I'd get back to chapter 13 of Luke, but I guess I won't. We're at a good stopping point as far as the clock is concerned. I say as far as the clock is concerned because we have more time on the table.

We'll just go ahead and stop here.