

Gospel Truth

Biblical Instruction and Encouragement for the Mission Field Worldwide.

THE GODHEAD REVEALED

(The following account is a narrative of the event recorded in Matthew 3:13-17, John 1:31-34 KJV).

As a crowd of Jews stood watching, Jesus stepped into the Jordan River to be baptized. He had traveled from Galilee to where John the Baptist was preaching and baptizing. At thirty years of age, Jesus was ready to begin His public ministry and to fulfill His divine purpose on earth. As He waded out into the water, John began to protest: "I am not worthy to baptize you." Yet, God had appointed John to introduce the Messiah to the world.

John the Baptist took hold of Jesus and lowered Him back, immersing Him in the water. As they came up out of the river, water draining down the face of Christ, the heavens were opened. The Spirit of God descended in the bodily form of a dove and rested upon Jesus. The voice of God the Father spoke from Heaven for all to hear: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The crowd stood in shock and amazement at this miraculous revelation of God. John the Baptist bare record that truly "This is the Son of God."

The fullness of God was manifest at the Jordan River that day. The triune God, as three distinct persons, was clearly represented. The person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was baptized. The person of the Holy Spirit descended like a dove. The person of the Father spoke out of heaven. The Godhead

was distinctly present as three persons and yet was singular in purpose as one God.

The Trinity is the doctrine that describes the nature of God. It signifies the union of three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—in the Godhead. In past centuries, this subject has been a source of much theological controversy. Even today, there are professing Christian movements that deny the veracity of the Trinity. The Trinity doctrine asserts the following:

1. There is one and only one God.
2. God eternally exists in three distinct persons.
3. The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God.
4. The Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Father, the Father is not the Spirit, etc.

The Ante-Nicene Fathers (pre 325 AD) asserted Christ's deity and referred to the "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." Tertullian, in 215 AD, is supposedly the first theologian to use the word "Trinity" to explain that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are "one in essence—not one in person."

Controversy about the deity and incarnation of Christ raged throughout the third century. In the fourth century, Arius promoted a false teaching that the Father existed prior to the Son. He contended that Christ was

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WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES ABOUT...

Word of God

2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21; Matt. 24:35

Relationship of Love

Matt. 22:37-40; John 14:21-23; 1 John 4:7-11

Repentance

Acts 3:19; Acts 17:30; 2 Cor. 7:10

New Birth

John 3:3-7; 2 Cor. 5:17; Rom. 6:1-4;
Eph. 2:1, 5-6

Freedom From Sin

1 John 5:18; Matt. 1:21; John 8:11

Infilling of the Holy Spirit

Acts 19:2; Acts 15:8-9; Acts 1:8

Holiness

Luke 1:73-75; Heb. 12:14; 1 Peter 1:15-16;
Titus 2:11-12; Rom. 6:22

Kingdom of God

Luke 17:20-21; Romans 14:17; John 18:36

The Church

Acts 2:47; Eph. 4:4-6; 1 Cor. 12:12-13; Col 1:18

Unity

John 17:20-23; Gal 3:28; Rev. 18:2-4

Ordinances

Matt. 28:19-20; Matt. 26:26-30;
1 Cor. 11:23-27; John 13:14-17

Divine Healing

Luke 4:18; Isaiah 53:4-5; James 5:13-16

Sanctity of Marriage

Matt. 19:5-6; Luke 16:18; Rom. 7:2-3;
1 Cor. 7:10-11

Outward Appearance

1 Tim. 2:9-10; 1 Cor. 11:14-15; Deut. 22:5

End of Time

2 Peter 3:7-12; John 5:28-29; 2 Cor. 5:10;
Matt 25:31-46

Pacifism

Luke 6:27-29; Luke 18:20

Worship

John 4:23-24; Eph. 5:19; 2 Cor. 3:17

Great Commission

Mark 16:15

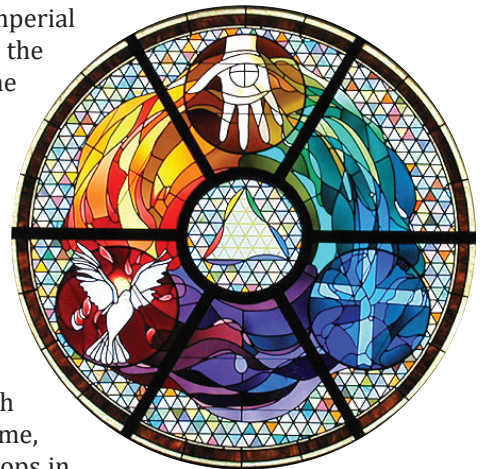
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not by nature God nor was He eternal. Arianism held the belief that Christ was the highest of all created beings. This doctrine began to spread rapidly.

When Constantine ascended the imperial throne and made Christianity the religion of Rome, he convened the First Council of Nicaea in 325 AD to settle the doctrinal disputes over the nature of Christ and to define the relationship of the Son to the Father. Athanasius of Alexandria was the leader of those contending for the divinity of Christ and His equality with the Father. While there was already much apostasy in the church at this time, the majority of the 250-318 bishops in attendance took a stand against the Arian heresy and reaffirmed the biblical truth that Christ was divine, eternal, and part of the Godhead. The Council of Nicaea adopted the Nicene Creed which described Christ as "God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father."

It is foundational to the Christian faith that there is one God that exists as three distinct persons. If the divinity of Christ is denied, there is no redemption from sin as His blood would have no more power than that of bulls and of goats. Thanks be to God the Father who sent His Son Jesus to this earth to die for our sins that we might be saved and be a temple for the Holy Spirit to dwell within.

—mws



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Editorial



For in him [God] we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. — Acts 17:28-29

It is only because of God that we have breath and strength, for He is the Fountain of Life. It is only because of God that we have peace, salvation, and hope of eternal life. As the offspring of God—living and intelligent beings—we must not relegate the Godhead to an inanimate object created by man but recognize that the Godhead is more excellent than the creation and worthy of worship.

This quarter, I address the subject of the Godhead and examine the scriptures that prove the doctrine of the Trinity. I have been richly blessed as the nature of God has been more clearly revealed though the study of His Word. While the Trinity can be complicated to understand and many illustrations given to explain the Trinity are inadequate, the truth of it is very important to comprehend God's plan and design for mankind. As one author stated: "If you try to explain the Trinity, you will lose your mind. But if you deny it, you will lose your soul."

Consider the writing of F. G. Smith on this subject from *What the Bible Teaches*:

To many, this doctrine of the Trinity appears like an unimportant matter, but in reality it is not. If Christ, with His marvelous perfections, be not truly God, then instead of bringing man to God, He has only succeeded in revealing to us the impassable gulf that exists between us and the divine One. If He truly is "God manifest in the flesh" for the purpose of transforming sinful man into His own image, then we are assured of our moral and spiritual correspondence and communion with the Father in heaven.

Since the exact manner of existence in the Godhead manifestly lies above and beyond the range of mortal mind, the basis of our theology respecting God should be laid solely in what is revealed to us in the Holy Scriptures. And if we appeal directly to them, we find it is impossible to avoid the doctrine of the Trinity taught therein without doing great violence to scores of plain texts bearing on the subject. (p. 45)

My prayer is that the reader accepts the simplicity of God's Word which itself defines the nature of God. It is a blessing to experience one God in three persons working and functioning in our daily life.

Michael W. Smith

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**"WHEREFORE THOU ART GREAT, O LORD GOD:
FOR THERE IS NONE LIKE THEE,
NEITHER IS THERE ANY GOD BESIDE THEE,
ACCORDING TO ALL THAT WE HAVE HEARD WITH OUR EARS."
—2 SAMUEL 7:22**



Bible Study Guide

Subject: The Trinity

Scripture Reading: *For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word [Jesus], and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. —1 John 5:7*

Summary: There is one and only one God, eternally existent in the union of three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. While these persons are distinct from one another in individuality and function, they are one in essence and nature.

Definition: The Trinity, formed from the words “tri” and “unity,” describes the state of being threefold and yet one. It is the theological term employed to signify the doctrine of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit being three coexistent, coeternal persons and yet one God.

I. One God

- A. Deuteronomy 6:4 The LORD our God is one LORD. (Mark 12:29)
- B. 1 Corinthians 8:4-6 There is none other God but one.
- C. Galatians 3:20 God is one.
- D. 1 Timothy 2:5 There is one God.

II. God the Father

- A. 2 Peter 1:17 He received from God the Father.
- B. Ephesians 5:20 Giving thanks unto God and the Father.
- C. John 6:27 For him hath God the Father sealed.
- D. Romans 1:7 Grace & peace from God our Father.
- E. 1 Peter 1:2 Foreknowledge of God the Father.

III. God the Son

- A. John 20:28 My Lord and my God.
- B. Hebrews 1:8 Unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever.
- C. John 1:1, 14 The Word [Jesus] was God.
- D. 1 Timothy 3:16 God was manifest in the flesh.
- E. Philippians 2:5-6 Christ Jesus in the nature of God.
- F. Matthew 1:23 Jesus the son is Emmanuel or “God with us.”
- G. Isaiah 9:6 The son is called “The mighty God.”
- H. Colossians 2:9 In him dwells the fulness of the Godhead bodily.
- I. Colossians 1:15, 16 Christ is the image of God. All things are created by him.

IV. God the Holy Spirit

- A. Genesis 1:1-2 The Holy Spirit was a creator.
- B. Acts 5:3-4 A lie to the Holy Ghost is a lie unto God.
- C. 1 Corinthians 3:16 The Spirit of God dwells in the temple of God.

- D. Romans 8:14 Those led by the Spirit are the sons of God.

V. The Trinity Revealed

- A. Matthew 3:16-17 Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were all distinctly present at Christ’s baptism.
- B. Matthew 28:19 Baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.
- C. Luke 1:30-35 Three personalities of God in view at Christ’s conception.
- D. Acts 7:54-56 Stephen, full of the Holy Ghost, saw Jesus standing by God.
- E. John 14:26 Three-fold God demonstrated. (John 15:26)
- F. 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 Same Spirit, Lord, and God.
- G. 2 Corinthians 13:14 The three aspects of God explicitly mentioned.
- H. Ephesians 4:4-6 One Spirit, Lord, and Father.

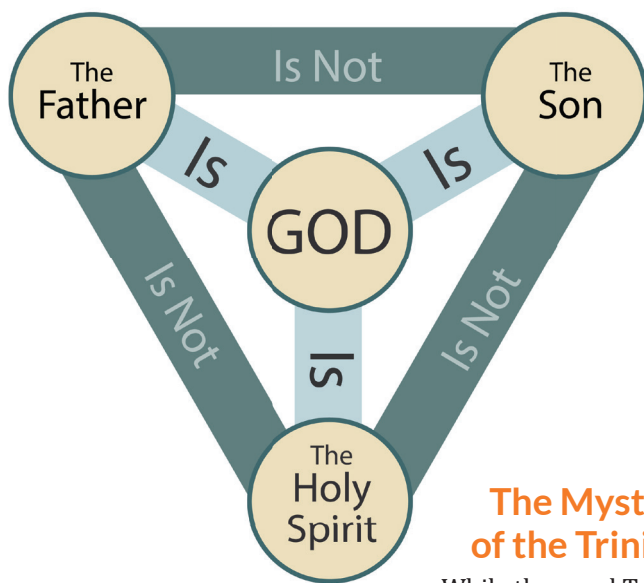
VI. Oneness of the Trinity

- A. Genesis 1:26-27 Man was made in the image & likeness of the triune God. (Genesis 3:22)
- B. 1 John 5:7 The Father, the Word [Jesus], and the Holy Ghost are one.
- C. John 10:30; 17:11, 22 Jesus and the Father are one.
- D. John 10:38 The Father is in Jesus and Jesus is in the Father.
- E. John 12:44 Believing in Jesus is believing in the Father.
- F. John 14:8-11 Seeing Christ is seeing the Father.

Conclusion: And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord. —Mark 12:29

THE TRIUNE GODHEAD

The Bible clearly teaches that there is only one true and living God who is the creator of the universe—eternal, almighty, unchangeable, infinitely powerful, wise, just and holy. At the same time, it teaches that the Father is God, that Jesus is God, and that the Holy Spirit is God. This relationship of one God in three distinct, divine persons is theologically termed the Trinity.



The Mystery of the Trinity

While the word Trinity is not found in the Scripture, the concept it represents exists. The ONE God is composed of three coexistent, coeternal, coequal, and co-powerful persons who are one in spirit, purpose, duration, and nature, yet three in individuality, mind, and function.

The concept of the Trinity is a somewhat mysterious principle and can be difficult to totally comprehend and understand. God is infinitely greater than humanity and

the mind alone cannot fathom the depth and totality of God. At the same time, it is paramount to understand what the Bible says on the subject as the salvation and keeping of the soul is dependent upon the truths and reality of the triune Godhead.

God is One God

When Jesus was asked about the first commandment, He replied, "Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord" (Mark 12:29). Literally, "Yahweh, our God, is one Yahweh." Other nations worshipped many gods, but the God of the Jews was one. Quoting from Deuteronomy 6:4, Jesus reaffirmed the truth that there is only one true God. The God of the Old Testament is the same God of the New Testament. Monotheism is a fundamental truth of the Word of God and the theology of God must never become tritheism, or three distinct gods. Paul stated in 1 Corinthians 8:4 that "there is none other God but one." This truth is reaffirmed in Galatians 3:20, "God is one" and in 1 Timothy 2:5, "There is one God."

God is Triune

The one God is a triune God. The Godhead is composed of the Father, the Son, and the Holy

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“The Father, the Son,
and the Holy Spirit
are three persons
that exist in perfect
harmony as one God.
They are not names
for different parts
of God, for they are
God, and God is one.”

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Spirit. “For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word [Jesus], and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one” (1 John 5:7). This scripture is a clear declaration of the plurality of the Deity and of the unity of the divine essence of God. Each person of the Trinity is referred to as God in the scripture. They are not three gods, but together they are one God. Each part of the Godhead is distinguished as a separate entity in the Bible—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

God the Father

God the Father is referred to in numerous verses. Jesus spoke of “God the Father” in John 6:27. Paul wrote to the congregation at Rome: “Grace to you and peace from God our Father” (Romans 1:7). Peter stated that Jesus “received from God the Father honour and glory” (2 Peter 1:17). He further spoke of the “foreknowledge of God the Father” (1 Peter 1:2). God the Father was clearly an individual entity of which Christ and the apostles spoke.

God the Son

Jesus Christ was also spoken of multiple times in both the Old and New Testaments as being God. While many deny the divinity of Christ or teach that He was the Father, the Word teaches that He was a distinct part of the Godhead. The prophet Isaiah wrote: “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given...his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God” (Isaiah 9:6). The angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph

and spoke of Mary bringing forth a son. “They shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us” (Matthew 1:23). In beautiful words, John 1:1, 14 communicates, “In the beginning was the Word [Jesus], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... And the Word [Jesus] 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.” He existed from eternity. “But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever” (Hebrews 1:8). Jesus, sent from the Father, was God become flesh among us (Romans 9:5). “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh” (1 Timothy 3:16). When Thomas saw Jesus after His crucifixion, he answered and “said unto him [the resurrected Jesus], My Lord and my God” (John 20:28). Jesus was in the form or nature of God (Philippians 2:5-6) and “in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (Colossians 2:9). Without doubt, there is extensive biblical proof that Jesus is eternal and divine.

God the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is a third part of the Trinity. Even in the beginning of time, the Holy Spirit existed as a creator. “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.... And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters” (Genesis 1:1-2). The Holy Spirit is revealed as God in Acts 5:3-4. “Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost....thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.” To lie to the

Holy Spirit is to lie to God. Another proof of God the Holy Spirit is found in 1 Corinthians 3:16: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" Who abides in the temple or dwelling place of God except God Himself? It is God the Holy Spirit that dwells in these earthly temples of God. The Holy Spirit, as God, exercises the divine prerogative to call and bestow divine gifts upon the saints of God (Acts 13:2). His deity is further revealed in Romans 8:14: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

Three in One

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are three persons that exist in perfect harmony as one God. They are not names for different parts of God, for they are God, and God is one. Their plurality is exemplified and revealed in numerous passages. When the angel appeared to Mary as recorded in Luke 1:30-35, the message included all aspects of the Trinity. God the Father overshadowed her and the Holy Spirit came upon her to conceive the Son of God. It was prophesied that the Lord God would give to the Son the throne and of His kingdom there would be no end.

Revealed at Jesus' Baptism

All three persons of the Godhead were present in some form in the account of the baptism of Jesus in Matthew 3:16-17. The Holy Spirit descended as a dove on the physical body of Jesus and the voice of the Father spoke from heaven. Clearly, these were three distinct entities and shows the error in the teaching that God the Father and Jesus are the same person.

Jesus taught His disciples to be baptized "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 28:19). This encompassed all aspects of God. The three personalities are revealed when Jesus spoke to His disciples concerning the coming of the Holy Spirit. "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name [Jesus], he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26).

Revealed at Stephen's Stoning

The Godhead was revealed to Stephen when he was being stoned in Acts 7:54-56. He was

full of the Holy Ghost and looked up and saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God [the Father]. The Bible speaks of the diversities of gifts, administrations, and operations but teaches that it is the same Spirit, the same Lord, and the same God (1 Corinthians 12:4-6). Ephesians 4:4-6 teaches that there is one Spirit, one Lord, one God and Father of all. The triune God, as three distinct personalities, is revealed in these scriptures.

The Oneness of the Trinity

While the Trinity is three, God is one. If any one of the three were removed, there would be no God. This is part of the mystery and paradox of God, for they cannot be separate from one another. The oneness of the Trinity is also exemplified in many passages in the Bible. Genesis 1:26 reads, "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness". Note the plurality as God referred to "us" and "our image." This indicated the presence of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Genesis 1:27 reads "God created man in his own image." We now see the singularity of God.

Jesus spoke in multiple places of His union and oneness with the Father. "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30). "The Father is in me, and I in him" (John 10:38). He prayed for the unity of His disciples for them to be one "even as we are one" (John 17:11, 22). Jesus said in John 12:44, "He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me [the Father]. Philip asked Jesus to show them the Father. Jesus responded by saying: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me" (John 14:8-11).

A Clear Doctrine of God's Word

The doctrine of the Godhead, the Trinity, is clearly presented in God's Word, although there are aspects that are difficult to understand. Those things that are not clear in the Scripture become relatively



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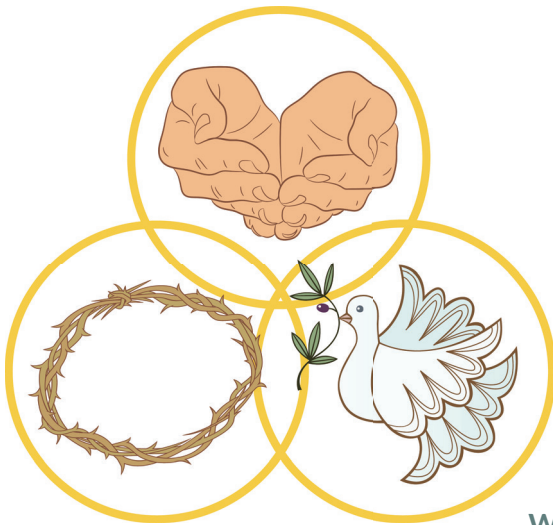
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nonessential, and debate over things not taught in the Word can be counterproductive. If someone denies the validity of the doctrine of the Trinity, they will end up denying either the divinity of the Son of God or the divine power and enablement of the Holy Spirit. There is one God. There are three, divine persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. These three are one eternal, existing God. Christians should rejoice and adore this God who has done and continues to do great things in behalf of His children.

“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!... For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen” (Romans 11:33, 36). We worship thee oh God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

—mws

INDIVIDUAL ROLES OF THE TRINITY



**“THE FATHER CREATES A PLAN,
JESUS CHRIST IMPLEMENTS THE PLAN,
AND THE HOLY SPIRIT ADMINISTERS THE PLAN.”**

The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are unified together as God and function in harmony in the universe as well as in the lives of mankind.

While the members of the Godhead have common goals and purpose, as well as shared attributes and functions, each person of the Trinity also has unique roles and responsibilities.

One author summed up the roles of the Trinity thus: “The Father creates a plan, Jesus Christ implements the plan, and the Holy Spirit administers the plan.”

God the Father is love. He is the source and master designer of the plan of salvation. It is the Father that sent His Son to fulfill His plan for the redemption of humanity.

In obedience to the Father, Jesus took on the form of flesh and died on the cross that through His blood the world might be saved from sin. Jesus bridged the gap between the Father and mankind and is a high priest and mediator for His people. He is the savior of the world and the head of the church.

The Holy Spirit, sent from the Father, convicts, teaches, leads, and comforts. He sanctifies and dwells in the hearts of God’s people. The Spirit empowers and enables people to live according to the will of the Father.

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.”

—2 Corinthians 13:14



ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

*The first chapter of the Bible opens with “In the beginning God....”
The Word reveals to mankind the attributes and characteristics that God Himself
chose to share with us. His design, will, and judgments bring clarity and purpose.
Life is made fuller and richer as we learn and understand more about the nature of God.*

GOD IS...

Immaterial

God is not fundamentally composed of matter.

“God is a Spirit.” —John 4:24

Self-existent

God is uncreated and inexhaustible. He is absolute reality.

“And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM.” —Exodus 3:14

Self-sufficient

God needs nothing from outside of Himself.

“The Father hath life in himself.” —John 5:26

Eternal

God had no beginning and He will have no end. He is immortal and has infinite duration.

“Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.” —Psalms 90:2

Infinite

God is immeasurable, without bounds, and has no limitations.

“Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite.” —Psalms 147:5

Triune

God reveals Himself to mankind in three persons—the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit.

For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost.” —1 John 5:7

One

God is singular and cannot be divided. There is one true and living God.

“The Lord our God is one Lord.” —Mark 12:29

Sovereign

God possess supreme authority and power and is ruler over all.

“For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods.” —Psalms 95:3

Jealous

God is possessive of the worship and service that rightly belongs to Him.

“For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.” —Exodus 34:14

Immutable

God is unchanging, reliable, and trustworthy.

“For I am the Lord, I change not.” —Malachi 3:6



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Omnipresent

God is always present and is everywhere.

“Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? . . . Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD.” —Jeremiah 23:24

Omnipotent

God possess unlimited power and authority.

“All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.” —Matthew 28:18

Omniscient

God is all-knowing and perfect in knowledge. He knows the past, present, and future.

“Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.” —Hebrews 4:13

Wise

God has deep understanding and discernment and knows what is best in every situation.

“Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his.” —Daniel 2:20

Love

God has the well-being of humanity as His primary concern. Love is the defining attribute of God’s character. It is more than an emotion, it is an action.

“And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.” —1 John 4:16

Holy

God is righteous and perfect in moral purity. He is separate from all sin, evil, and impurity.

“Be ye holy; for I am holy.” —1 Peter 1:16

Just

God deals with moral equity and fairness according to that which is upright and good.

“Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne.” —Psalms 89:14

Good

God is kind, benevolent and full of favor and blessings.

“The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance.” —Romans 2:4

Faithful

God is steadfast, reliable, true and cannot lie.

“Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God.” —Deuteronomy 7:9

Merciful

God is forgiving, sympathetic, and compassionate.

“The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.” —Psalms 103:8

Gracious

God is generous and a giver of gifts that are undeserved.

“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men.” —Titus 2:11

Incomparable

God is beyond comparison. He is unequalled and perfect.

“To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One.” —Isaiah 40:25





How can the Trinity be illustrated?

There are many illustrations that have been used to illustrate the concept of the Trinity. Most illustrations fall short of fully demonstrating God being three in one and they must simply be regarded as imperfect ways of trying to visualize the mystery of the Trinity. It can be dangerous to illustrate improperly because when many illustrations are carried out, they lead to false conclusions about the Trinity.

The egg is commonly used to illustrate the Trinity. A chicken egg is composed of the shell, the egg white, and a yolk and together they are one egg. The three parts create a unified whole. Unlike the Trinity, the yolk is not an egg in and of itself. Christ is fully God, and yet God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They are all of one essence unlike the parts of the egg. Similarly, an apple is comprised of the skin, flesh, and seeds. It falls short just as the egg illustration as each person of the Trinity independently is still God.

Another common illustration involves water which can exist as a solid, liquid, or gas. Its chemical composition remains the same and it is of one substance regardless of the state.

However, water usually exists in one state at a time, whereas the Trinity in its fulness is present always. While ice may become a liquid, the Son never becomes the Father, etc.

Another illustration used is that of a man who is a father, a son, and husband at the same time and yet is just one person. This would demonstrate a trinity of functions but falls short of demonstrating the separateness of the three persons of the Trinity.

Dr. Henry Morris notes that the universe is trinitarian in design. It consists of three things: matter, space, and time. If you remove any one of those three, the universe would cease to exist. While this shows the interconnectedness of three in one, each part is not the whole as is each person of the Godhead.

Geometrical designs have also been used to illustrate the Trinity. The triangle for example, has three independent sides connecting to form one shape. However, it is inadequate as each line is not a triangle of itself.

While it is not wrong to try to conceptualize the Trinity, it can often lead to error. All illustrations eventually fail and do not prove the Trinity, as an infinite God cannot be fully described by a finite illustration. The doctrine of the Trinity is a revelation of God not a concept revealed by nature or reason.

What is the hypostatic union?

Jesus Christ is one person with two natures—divine and human. The hypostatic union describes this union of Christ's humanity and divinity in one hypostasis, or individual existence. Jesus is God in the flesh. "In the beginning was the Word [Jesus], and the Word [Jesus] was with God, and the Word [Jesus] was God.... and the Word [Jesus] was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1:1,14).

Jesus had two natures—God and man. He was not part God and part man but fully God and fully man. Jesus never lost His divinity but existed on the earth as God coupled with a human nature.

Why are the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit referred to as persons?

God is a trinity of persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They are not the same person as each other but together they are one God. The Father is not the Son, nor the Son the Spirit, yet each of them are God. This is depicted in the Trinity shield illustration on page 5.

They are not individual persons in the sense that they all have individual fleshly bodies, but in the context that they are individually self-aware, can speak, love, will, etc. These are attributes of personhood, and thus the common use of the word persons.



DID YOU KNOW?

Various Christian denominations are nontrinitarian and reject the doctrine of the Trinity. While in the minority, the two largest nontrinitarian denominations are The Church of Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) and Jehovah’s Witnesses.

Jehovah’s Witnesses consider Jesus to have had a beginning and to be a direct creation of God. They do not believe that the Holy Spirit is a person but God’s active force. Mormonism teaches that God created Christ and that the Godhead is a divine council of the three individual gods. This is a form of tritheism rather than the Biblical monotheistic teaching.



A Word
in Season

LET ME SEE JESUS ONLY

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HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD

And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only. —Matthew 17:8

Jesus, on the mount of transfiguration, communed with Moses and Elijah—Moses represented the law, Elijah the prophets, and Jesus the new dispensation of grace. In His awe and enthusiasm, Peter offered to make three tabernacles, one for each of them. A bright cloud overshadowed them and the Father spoke: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him” (v5). In fear, the disciples fell on their faces. When they lifted up their eyes, they saw no man save Jesus only.

There are many groups, movements, ministries, and people that are vying for our attention and allegiance. While there are good institutions and worthy people, Christ, alone with the Father, should be the object of our worship and devotion. It should not be the law nor the prophets that motivate us to service but Christ Himself. Whether in good times or in difficult times, we need a refreshing vision where we see none other but Jesus only. In a world of many voices, our ears need to singularly hear the Son of God.

When we set our eyes on people and situations, we will get disappointed and discouraged. Fellow soldier of the cross, keep your eyes on Jesus. Let Him be the motivation for your labor and sacrifice, for it is He that will faithfully see you though life in victory. As the song says: “Let me see Jesus only.”

—mws

