

**The NATURE and IMPORTANCE of the Trinity**

- 1) **"BUT THE WORD 'TRINITY' ISN'T EVEN IN THE BIBLE"** - That is true. The doctrine of the Trinity isn't the *starting* place in coming to an understanding of God. It's the *destination*. One *arrives* at the doctrine of the Trinity when certain questions are asked: *"What must God be like if He is to act and accomplish what the Bible teaches?"* For example, the proclamation of the simple Gospel states that **God redeems us in Jesus Christ** - "God was *in* Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself" (**2 Corinthians 5:19**). That Jesus was God is stated over and over in both Old and New Testaments. Fair enough. **To Whom, then did Jesus pray while He lived on earth? Was He merely talking to Himself? Jesus seemed to believe that the Father was in heaven listening.**

The doctrine of the Trinity is what you must end up with when you link together the Scriptural teaching on the *oneness of God* with the *clear data that God exists in more than one Person*. It's the necessary conclusion to hold together all that the Bible says about God.

- 2) **THERE IS ONLY ONE GOD** - We could wear ourselves out looking up the many references. Israel stood out in a world that worshipped many Gods. **See Deuteronomy 4:39** - "Know therefore today, and lay it to your heart, that the Lord is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other." See also **Deuteronomy 6:4** - "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one." And also **Isaiah 44:6** - "Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: 'I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god.'"

Jesus Himself affirmed the oneness of God in **Mark 12:29** - "Jesus answered, 'The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.'" And very significantly, He prayed to "the only true God" in **John 17:3** - "And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent."

The rest of the New Testament lines up with this same theme about the oneness of God - **see 1 Corinthians 8:6** - "...yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist." See also **Galatians 3:20** - "Now an intermediary implies more than one, but God is one." And also **Ephesians 4:6** - "There is....one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."

- 3) **GOD EXISTS IN THREE PERSONS** - Several points are very clear and important in the Scriptures:
- a) **Plural references to the Godhead** - see **Genesis 1:26** - "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.'" See also **Isaiah 6:8** - "And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' Then I said, 'Here am I! Send me.'"
  - b) **References to three specific persons** - **Isaiah 48:16, 61:1** - "Draw near to me, hear this: from the beginning I have not spoken in secret, from the time it came to be I have been there. And now the Lord God has sent me, and his Spirit....[61:1] ...." "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound...."
  - c) **Trinitarian references in the New Testament** - See **Matthew 28:19** - "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...." Also, **1 Corinthians 12:4-6** - "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; [5] and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; [6] and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone." See also **2 Corinthians 13:14** - "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all."
- 4) **JESUS IS GOD** - Many references could be cited. See **Isaiah 9:6** - "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

There are other key New Testament passages:

**Hebrews 1:8-9** - "But of the Son he says, 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom. [9] You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.'"

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

**Revelation 1:4-8** - "John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, [5] and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood [6] and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. [7] Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen. [8] "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

In addition to these direct references there is the weight of the evidence of the **actions and words of Jesus**. Perhaps topping the list was His claim to **forgive sins (Mark 2:7)**, resulting in the charge of blasphemy from the Pharisees. We must remember that the first disciples were all Jews - **radically monotheistic in background and training**. Yet they became convinced - **so much so that they laid down their lives for the conviction** - that Jesus was God incarnate. What made them change their minds?

They saw Jesus do things that only God could do. He could still the waters with His very words. He forgave the sins of other people. He raised the dead by His own power. Finally, He rose from the grave and ascended as they watched, into heaven.

- 5) **THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GOD** - Perhaps one reference makes the point most clearly - **See Acts 5:3-4** - **"But Peter said, 'Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? [4] While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.'"**

These verses clearly teach that the Holy Spirit is both **personal**. He can be **lied to**. He is not merely some cosmic force, or the power of God in action. Also, the Holy Spirit is **God** (note Peter's conclusion - to lie to the Spirit is equal to lying to God). See also **Ezekiel 11:5** - **"And the Spirit of the Lord fell upon me, and he said to me, 'Say, Thus says the Lord: So you think, O house of Israel. For I know the things that come into your mind.'"**

- 6) **THE SCRIPTURAL VIEW OF THE TRINITY ISN'T MODALISTIC** - That is to say, the Persons of the Trinity (Father, Son and Spirit) are not merely three different ways in which God makes His appearance. They are not merely different **expressions** of God. They are not merely different **roles** God assumes to accomplish different ends. It is important to stress that the three Persons are **permanently distinct and separate while being one in essence**. Jesus prays **to** the Father. The Father **sends** the Son. The Father and Son **send** the Holy Spirit. The three co-exist at the same time. They have done so for eternity.

This is true of Jesus Christ as well. While He did not become the **incarnate** Son until He was born of a woman on earth, He was always, eternally, the Second Person of the Trinity. He was the Son when He was **involved in the creation of the world** - **Colossians 1:16-17** - **"For by him (Jesus) all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. [17] And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together."**

- 7) **THE TRUTH OF THE TRINITY** - It is easy to lose sight of the fact that **man-made Gods are much simpler to conceive and discuss**. If we were free to manufacture our own data we could certainly come up with something much simpler than the Trinity. Christians working with Divine Revelation simply don't have that advantage. There is one final point - the doctrine of the Trinity isn't primarily to **explain God** (a hopeless task for finite minds). Rather, **it important because it helps us insure we are not distorting or saying less than the whole teaching of the Bible**. It's to guard against error and reduction of the Godhead.