

# Core Class: Biblical Doctrines: TRINITY - GOD

September 19, 2021

The Bible teaches not only that there is one God, but also that there are three persons in the Godhead – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is a mystery to the human mind, but although it cannot be understood, it can be believed because God’s Word says it is so. The word “trinity” is not found in the Bible, but the truth of the Trinity is revealed in the Bible.

## What is the best analogy of the Trinity? Or how would you explain the Trinity to a friend or neighbor?

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- **Egg:**
- **Tree:**
- **Water:**

All analogies have shortcomings. Ultimately no analogy adequately teaches about the Trinity, and all are misleading in significant ways.

## DEFINITION OF TRINITY

- **“God eternally exists as three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and each person is fully God, and there is one God.”** (Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 226).
- Meaning of the Word “Trinity”: The word “trinity” means “tri-unity” or “three-in-oneness.” It is used to summarize the teaching of the Bible that God is three persons, yet one God.

## THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY IS PROGRESSIVELY REVEALED IN SCRIPTURE.

- Partial Revelation in the Old Testament
  - Although the doctrine of the Trinity is not explicitly found in the OT, several passages suggest or even imply that God exists as more than one person. (Gen. 1:26, 3:22; Isa. 6:8; Ps. 45:6-7; Heb. 1:8; Ps. 110:1; Matt. 22:41-46; Isa. 63:10; Mal. 3:1-2; Hosea 1:7; Isa. 48:16; Prov. 8:22-31)
- More Complete Revelation of the Trinity in the NT (Matt. 3:16-17; 28:19; 1 Cor. 12:4-6; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 4:4-6; Jude 20-21)

## THREE STATEMENTS SUMMARIZE BIBLICAL TRINITY

- **1) God is three persons.**
  - The fact that God is three persons means that each person of the Trinity is distinct from the other two persons. (John 1:1-2, 17:24; 1 John 2:1; Heb. 7:25; John 14:26; Rom. 8:27; Matt. 28:19; John 16:7; 1 Cor. 12:4-6)
  - The Holy Spirit is a distinct person not just the power of God. (Eph. 4:4-6; John 14:26, 15:26; Rom. 8:26-27; 1 Cor. 2:10; Acts 16:6-7; Acts 8:29; Eph. 4:30)
  - Passages that would not make sense if the Holy Spirit is just the “power of God.” (Luke 4:14; Acts 10:38)
- **2) Each person is fully God.**
  - God the Father is clearly God.
  - The Son is fully God. (John 1:1-4, 20:28, 30-31; Titus 2:13; Rom. 9:5; Isa. 9:6; Col. 2:9)
  - The Holy Spirit is also fully God. (Matt. 28:19; 1 Cor. 12:4-6; 2 Cor. 13:14; Acts 5:3-4; 1 Cor. 3:16)
- **3) There is one God.**  
(Deut. 6:4-5; 1 Kings 8:60; Isa. 45:5-6, 21-22; 1 Tim. 2:5; Rom. 3:30; 1 Cor. 8:6; James 2:19).

There are no easy or simple explanations of the Trinity because we will risk denying a strand of scripture. God eternally and necessarily exists as the Trinity. (John 1:3; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2; Gen. 1:2; John 17:5, 24)

## IMPORTANCE OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

- ***“In the confession of the Trinity throbs the heart of the Christian religion: every error results from, or upon deeper reflection may be traced to, a wrong view of this doctrine.”*** Herman Bavink, *The Doctrine of God*, 285.
  - If there is no Trinity, the unity of the universe is at stake. Christianity stands or falls with the confession of the deity of Christ and of the Trinity.
  - A proper belief in the Trinity is essential to hold to the full deity of the Son and the Holy Spirit.
  - The atonement is at stake if Jesus is a mere created being.
  - Justification by faith alone is threatened if we deny the full deity of the Son.
  - If Jesus is merely a creature, no matter how great, it would be idolatry to worship him. (Phil. 2:9-11; Rev. 5:12-14)
  - If Jesus is a created being, then salvation is credited to a creature and not to God himself.
  - If there is no Trinity, then the independence and personal nature of God are at stake.

#### 🌍 **DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN THE FATHER, THE SON, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT**

- **The persons of the Trinity have different primary functions in relating to the world.**
  - Creation (John 1:3; Col. 1:16; Gen. 1:2)
  - Redemption (John 3:16; Gal. 4:4; Eph. 1:9-10; John 6:38; Heb. 10:5-7; John 14:26, 3:5-8; Rom. 8:13; Acts 1:8)
- **The persons of the Trinity eternally existed as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.** (Eph. 3:14-15; John 1:1-5; Phil. 2:5-11; Eph. 1:3-4; Rom. 8:29; 1 Peter 1:2; John 3:16-17)
  - The only distinction between the members of the Trinity is in the ways they relate to each other and to the creation.
- **What is the relationship between the three persons and the being of God?**
  - God’s being is not divided into three equal parts belonging to the three members of the Trinity.
  - The personal distinctions in the Trinity are not something added onto God’s real being.
  - The persons of the Trinity are not just three different ways of looking at the one being of God.
  - **There are three distinct persons, and the being of each person is equal to the whole being of God.**
- **Can we understand the doctrine of the Trinity?**

Although the doctrine of the Trinity is shrouded in mystery, it is not correct to say that we can understand nothing about the Trinity, but **we can and must believe.**

#### **THE NICENE CREED (AD 325)**

*I believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made; who, for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; he suffered and was buried; and the third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; and he shall come again, with glory, to judge both the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end. And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the Prophets. And one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.*