

## Question Three: What Is the Trinity?\*

Scripture reveals to us that God exists as three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Yet, these three persons are one being. This can be one of the most difficult concepts for us to comprehend, so we will take a look at what the Bible has to say about the three persons who are our one God.

### I. The Bible's View of the Trinity

The word "trinity" is never found in the Bible, but the idea is present in a number of places.

- A. Genesis 1:26 -- At creation, God said, "Let *us* make man in our image." Because we are created in the image of God, the *us* must be referring to the Godhead.
- B. Matthew 3:16-17 -- All three persons of the Trinity were present at the baptism of Christ: the Father speaking, the Son being baptized, and the Spirit resting on the Son.
- C. Matthew 28:19-20 -- The Great Commission commands us to baptize new disciples in the name of all three members of the Trinity.

### II. The Meaning of the Trinity

#### A. Each person of the Trinity is fully God.

- 1. God the Father is referred to throughout the pages of Scripture. Usually when God is mentioned, the Father is in mind. He is found in the first verse of Scripture, Genesis 1:1, creating everything.
- 2. God the Son is also treated as fully God. Colossians 2:9 says that in Him "the whole fulness of deity dwells bodily." Thomas recognized Jesus as "my Lord, and my God" in John 20:28).
- 3. God the Holy Spirit is placed on the same level as the other two members in passages like Matthew 28:19. Peter accuses Ananias and Sapphira of lying to the Holy Spirit, and he states that they have not lied to men but to God (Acts 5:3-4).

#### B. Yet, the Bible makes it clear that there is only one God.

- 1. Deuteronomy 6:4 -- The children of Israel were to understand that "the Lord is one."
- 2. Paul also made sure that his readers understood that God is one God (1 Tim. 2:5; Rom. 3:30).

\* The material in this handout is a summary of chapter three, "What is the Trinity?" in Wayne Grudem, *Christian Beliefs: Twenty Basics Every Christian Should Know*, ed. by Elliot Grudem (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 37-42.

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3. According to James, the demons even understand that God is one (2:19).
- C. While we cannot fully comprehend how God can be three distinct persons, yet one being, it is vitally important that this mystery is true.

#### III. The Distinct Roles of the Trinity

A. The members of the Trinity fulfill unique roles. These can be seen in a number of areas:

1. Creation: God the Father spoke creation into existence (Gen. 1:9-10). God the Son carried out the working of those words (John 1:3) by making everything. According to Genesis 1:2, the Spirit was present at creation, hovering over the face of the waters (sustaining and manifesting God's presence).
2. Salvation: God the Father loved the world so much that He gave His Son (John 3:16). God the Son paid the sacrifice for sin (Heb. 10:10). God the Spirit was sent to complete the work of the Father and Son (John 14:16 and 16:17).

B. In these works, the persons of the Trinity fulfill unique and different roles. While the members of the Trinity fulfill their roles as full deity, they do so in submission to the Father (the Father sends the Son, the Father and Son send the Spirit). God does these actions as an undivided being, yet He chooses to unfold them through the interpersonal relationships of the distinct persons of the Trinity.

C. This unity and diversity serves as a model for us:

1. Marriage: In marriage, two distinct persons become one flesh (Eph. 5:31). They are one being before God, yet each person in a marriage fulfills unique roles. 1 Corinthians 11:3 points out that the husband is the head of the wife as the Father is the head of Christ. Thus, the unique roles within the Trinity serve as a model for our marriages.
2. Church: The many members of the church make up one body (1 Cor. 12:12). Further, there is an ethnic diversity within the body that comes together into one unified whole within the people of God (Rev. 7:9).

#### Question to Ponder:

Why do all analogies of the Trinity fail in their ability to explain the Trinity? Should we then not use analogies to explain the Trinity? Why or why not?

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