



THE
TRINITY

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THE TRINITY: IS IT BIBLICAL?

by Doug Batchelor

An Amazing Fact: *Science tells us that light is constituted of three primary rays, or groups of wave-lengths. Clearly distinct from each other, none of them without the others could be light. Each ray has its own separate function. The first originates, the second illuminates, and the third consummates. The first ray, often called invisible light, is neither seen nor felt. The second is both seen and felt. The third is not seen but is felt as heat.*

Like light, our “One God” is revealed in the three distinct persons of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. “For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one” (1 John 5:7 NKJV).

1 THE HIGHEST SUBJECT

Few doctrinal subjects have generated more passionate debate among Christians than the theme of the trinity. Churches have split and wars have even been fought over the issues that surround the nature of the Godhead.

Perplexity over God's nature is not new. Since creation, man has diligently sought to understand and explain Him. In the book of Job, Zophar uttered the cry of each human heart when he declared, "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know?" (Job 11:7, 8).

John Wesley adds, "Bring me a worm that can comprehend a man, and then I will show you a man that can comprehend the triune God!"

The study of God is without rival—the highest subject any mortal can ever even attempt to approach or contemplate. Because God defines Himself as everlasting and the ultimate power, presence, and knowledge, this field of study is deeper, wider, and broader than any other.

"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:9). Finite human minds will never be able to fully understand everything about the eternal God, anymore than we can jump to the stars with our feeble legs. Therefore,

we need to approach this mystery shrouding His person with a large measure of barefoot reverence and deep humility. Like Moses, when he came into God's presence, we must take off our shoes, "for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Exodus 3:5). By laying aside our preconceived ideas, opinions and sectarian training, we can go directly to God's Word and learn what He has chosen to reveal about Himself. But remember, only God can fully understand God, so even after the most diligent research, we may still have some unanswered questions that will prove to be a fruitful field of study even throughout the eons of eternity.

2 ONE BIG PROBLEM

“**B**ut wait,” someone says. “If the Bible teaches that there is only one God, then how can God be composed of three persons?” Scripture unequivocally declares that there is only one God. For more than 3,000 years, Jews have repeated Deuteronomy 6:4. “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD.” This sacred passage is called the

shema (named after the Hebrew for its first word) and has been held in high esteem and memorized by devout Jews for centuries.

Isaiah records the testimony of God concerning Himself. “Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God. ... Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any” (Isaiah 44:6, 8). Jesus also taught about “the only true God” (John 17:3) and Paul wrote, “There is one God” (1 Timothy 2:5).

While most believers agree with this core truth, a heated debate over its deeper implication has raged throughout church history. Does this mean that there is one person who has three different titles? Or are there three separate persons who mysteriously morph into one being? Is Jesus merely a good man, a creation to redeem us, and only the Father is God? Still others hold that the Father and Son are indeed God but the Holy Spirit is only the impersonal force that does their bidding. Each of these conflicting ideas has attracted its loyal followers. Let's examine the basis for these views and compare them with the Bible.

3 ONLY JESUS?

In the 3rd century, Sabellius, a Libyan priest living in Rome, taught that God is a single person with different titles—known as modalism. Thus, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit represent different hats or titles that God wears, depending on how He wishes to communicate with man at the time. It's akin to water, which can take on the form of a solid, liquid, or gas.

However, they are not three roles played by one person. The church recognized Sabellius' ideas as contrary to Bible teaching, and he was quickly excommunicated. Yet he still has adherents today in what is commonly known as the "Oneness" or "Jesus Only" doctrine. The Jesus Only teaching claims that Jesus Christ is not only the Son, but also the Father and the Holy Spirit. Isaiah 9:6, in which the Messiah (or the promised Son) is called "The everlasting Father," is used to provide biblical support for this belief.

The Oneness doctrine, however, overlooks the fact that the Son came to earth

to reveal the true character of God the Father to a world groping in spiritual blindness. Jesus prayed to His Father in Gethsemane, "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world" (John 17:5, 6). Jesus is the only one who could reveal the Father, because He is the express image of the Father (Luke 10:22; Hebrews 1:3).

Thus when the disciples asked Christ what the Father was like, He could say, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). Jesus so mirrored the character of the Father that He perfectly reflected Him, hence the title "The Everlasting Father." Another reason Jesus is called the Everlasting Father is because this world and everything in it was created through Christ. So in a very real sense, Jesus is our father (Hebrews 1:2; John 1:3).

Isaiah 9:6 is the only place in the Bible where Jesus is called the Father. Keep in mind that Jesus also calls Himself the Son of man, our brother, our shepherd, our friend, and our priest. To build a doctrine on one Scripture is as foolish as building a house on

top of a single fence post. The Bible physically separates the Father and the Son repeatedly. While Christ was on earth, He referred to His Father in heaven. “My Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 10:32). He always directed His prayers heavenward to the Father and stated that the Father had His own individual will; “Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:42). “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” (Luke 23:46). Then after He died and rose again, He ascended to “the right hand of God” (Romans 8:34). This indicates the Father has a separate presence.

In fact, Jesus said that He wasn't the Father more than 80 times. While always remaining one in purpose and origin, Jesus and the Father are clearly separate and distinct persons. And on more than one occasion, the Father spoke to Jesus from heaven. “And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased’” (Matthew 3:17 NKJV). Either Jesus and the Father are two separate individual persons, or Jesus was an expert ventriloquist.

4 IS JESUS FULLY GOD?

Another group questions whether Jesus actually possesses all the characteristics of the Eternal God. They stem from Arius, a 4TH century Alexandrian priest, who had a different take on God. He taught that prior to making anything else, God created a son who was neither equal to, nor coeternal with, the Father. According to this idea, called Arianism, Jesus Christ is a supernatural creature, but He is neither fully human nor fully divine. Still others embrace a more immature version of this doctrine, holding that back in the dawn of time, God the Father had some form of cosmic intimate relations with the Holy Spirit and Jesus was the product. They reason, “How else can you call Him the Son?”

However, these concepts are totally contrary to the teaching of the New Testament in which Jesus is revealed as the Eternal Creator and not a created being (John 1:1–4). As we compare Scripture definitions for God with the Bible record of Jesus, we see the characteristics of Jehovah are also ascribed to

Jesus. Note these powerful examples:

- He is self-existent (John 1:1–4; 14:6); only God is self-existent (Psalm 90:2).
- Jesus defines Himself as eternal. “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty” (Revelation 1:8).
- He is, and has, eternal life (1 John 5:11, 12, 20).
- He is all-powerful (Revelation 1:8). He created all things (John 1:3). “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). “For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him” (Colossians 1:16 NKJV).
- The Father even calls Jesus God. “But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom” (Hebrews 1:8).

- Jesus is able to forgive sin (Luke 5:20, 21); The Bible says only God can forgive sin (Isaiah 43:25).
- Jesus accepted worship that according to the Ten Commandments is reserved only for the Almighty (Matthew 14:33). “And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, ‘All hail.’ And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him” (Matthew 28:9). Upon seeing the risen Savior, the converted skeptic, Thomas, confessed, “My LORD and my God!” (John 20:26–29).
- Even the angels worship Jesus. “And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him” (Hebrews 1:6).
- The Scriptures also teach that only God knows the thoughts of a man’s heart (1 Kings 8:39). Yet Jesus consistently knew what people were thinking, “for he knew what was in man” (John 2:25). “Nathanael said to Him, ‘How do You know me?’ Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Before Philip called you, when

you were under the fig tree, I saw you” (John 1:48 NKJV).

- Through the Spirit, Jesus is omnipresent. “Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20 NKJV). “For I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city” (Acts 18:10 NKJV).
- He has power to give life, and even resurrected Himself. “No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again” (John 10:18). “I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live” (John 11:25).

Therefore, by considering the primary definitions of God, and seeing that Jesus fits every one of those definitions, obviously, Jesus must be eternal God.

5 HIS ENEMIES KNEW

Even Jesus' enemies understood and recognized His claim of equality with the Father God. When He boldly proclaimed, "I and my Father are one," Jewish leaders were outraged and sought to execute Him. They understood unequivocally that Jesus was claiming to be God Himself. "The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God" (John 10:30, 33).

The Jews even attempted to stone Christ when He assumed the self-existent title of Jehovah used at the burning bush. Jesus said to them, "'Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.'" Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by" (John 8:58 NKJV).

The Jews understood that Jesus claimed equality with God, when He said "'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.'

Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, ... but said also that God was his Father, making Himself equal with God” (John 5:17, 18).

There are only three conclusions one can derive from reading these passages. First, Jesus was insane when He made these outrageous claims. Second, He was a liar. These are unacceptable options. The third possibility is that He uttered a sublime truth. For a Christian who accepts the substitutionary death of Christ on the cross, the third option is the only tenable one. Otherwise, a liar or delusional man could not be righteous enough to be our Savior.

6 MEDIEVAL ERROR?

Probably the most widely held Christian view of God is known as the “trinity.” This popular belief teaches that the Godhead consists of three distinct persons who have existed together from eternity past and are named the Father, the Son (Jesus Christ), and the Holy Spirit. Each one possesses original, underived, and unborrowed life. They are all

equally God and are one in nature, character, and purpose. They are not three “gods,” but one God in a combination of the three distinct persons.

Some have implicated trinitarianism as heresy because they claim the wayward medieval church was the culprit to first introduce it. In fact, to distance themselves from the Catholic version of the trinity, many Protestant leaders from the 19TH century preferred the more biblical term “Godhead” when referring to the triune God.

However, just because an apostate church believes in the trinity, or any other doctrine for that matter, does not automatically make it unbiblical. The converse is also true. A position is not accurate just because some of the early church leaders advocated it. Even the Apostles misunderstood the nature of Jesus’ first coming. Doctrinal validity must be based on biblical authority and not upon whom advocates it or rejects it.

The Old Testament was written long before the existence of the Christian church, apostate or true, and it teaches there are three persons in the Godhead. In Isaiah, the Redeemer, which is Jesus Christ in the New

Testament (Galatians 4:4, 5), declares the “Lord God and His Spirit” are responsible for sending Him on His mission of redemption (Isaiah 48:16, 17 NKJV).

Some think that because the word “trinity” (derived from the Latin word *trinitas*, meaning “threeness”) is not found in the Bible, the concept of a triune God cannot be right. However, even though the word “millennium,” meaning one thousand years, does not appear in Revelation 20, we use it to describe earth’s 1,000-year rest after Jesus’ return. A teaching is not any less true simply because an extra-biblical word is used to define what is clearly a biblical teaching. This goes for the trinity, second coming, investigative judgment, and a host of other concise terms for doctrines.

7 ONE GOD, THREE PERSONS

The names of God reveal attributes of His nature. God has a long-established habit of using various names to describe a person’s character. Jacob earned his name that means “swindler” when he practiced deception to steal his father’s blessing away

from his brother Esau (Genesis 27:35, 36). At his conversion, Jacob wrestled with the angel and insisted on the blessing of God. Then his name was changed to “Israel,” which means “a prince with God” (Genesis 32:26–28).

Likewise, the names for God found in Genesis and elsewhere tell us volumes about our Creator. “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness” (Genesis 1:26). The Hebrew word here for God is Elohim. It is a plural noun that is used more than 2,700 times in the Old Testament. This means that inspired authors preferred to use Elohim about 10 times more than the singular form “El” when they described God. Even in the Old Testament book of Daniel, we see a picture of the Father and the Son as two separate persons. “I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him” (Daniel 7:13). The Son of man, Jesus, is seen coming before the Ancient of Days—who is, obviously, God the Father.

The New Testament writings are sprinkled with this concept of one God with three united, fully divine persons. The apostle

Paul wrote that there were three divine persons: “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Ephesians 4:4–6).

Paul frequently referred to the three separate persons of the Godhead. “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all” (2 Corinthians 13:14). “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Hebrews 9:14).

Revelation opens by introducing the three persons of the Godhead. “From the seven Spirits who are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever” (Revelation 1:4–6 NKJV).

In addition, we clearly see three distinct persons at the baptism of Jesus. “And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:16,17).

If Jesus is the only person in the Godhead, where did the voice come from that declared, “This is my beloved Son”? Did He trisect Himself into a voice from heaven, the dove wafting down through the sky, and His body on the bank of the river? No. This was not simply a clever act of holy smoke and mirrors, but rather a regal reunion revealing the truth of the trinity. And on top of this, it is through the shared authority of these three persons that we are commissioned to baptize. “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 28:19).

8 UNITY OR QUANTITY?

Most of the confusion regarding the number of beings composing the Godhead springs from a simple misunderstanding of the word “one.” Simply put, “one” in the Bible does not always mean numerical quantity. Depending on the Scripture, “one” can often mean unity.

We see this principle established very early in Scripture. “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24, emphasis added). “One flesh” here does not mean that a married couple melt into one human after their wedding, but rather they are to be united into one family. Jesus prayed that the apostles would be one, saying, “And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one” (John 17:22, 23).

We need to keep in mind that when Moses said, “The LORD is one,” Israel was surrounded with polytheistic nations that worshiped many gods that were constantly

involved in petty bickering and rivalry (Deuteronomy 6:4), whereas the God who created is composed of three separate beings who are perfectly united in their mission of saving and sustaining their creatures. As the Spirit is executing the will of both the Father and Son, it is His will also.

“For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one” (1 John 5:7). Granted, it is a brain exercise to grasp that one God (“He”) is also, and equally, “They.” Like one rope with three united strands, the three persons of the Father, Son, and Spirit make up the one God.

9 GOD MANIFESTED IN NATURE

Though there is nothing in this world that adequately illustrates God, Paul declare the “invisible things of him from the creation of the world” can help us understand “his eternal power and Godhead” (Romans 1:20). The truth that God is a “tri-unity” of two invisible persons (Father and Spirit) and one

visible person (Jesus) is evident even in creation.

The universe is composed of three structures: space, matter, and time. Of these three, only matter is visible. Space requires length, height, and width to constitute space. Each dimension is separate and distinct in itself, yet the three form space—if you remove height, you no longer have space. Time is also a triunity of past, present, and future. Two are invisible (past and future), and one visible (present). Each is separate and distinct, as well as essential for time to exist. Man is also a “triunity,” having physical, mental, and spiritual components. Again, two are invisible (mental and spiritual) and one visible (physical). Cells compose the fundamental structural unit of all living organisms. All organic life is made up from cells that consist of three primary parts: the outer wall, the cytoplasm, and the nucleus (like the shell, white, and yolk of an egg). If any one is removed, the cell dies.

In each of these examples, the removal of any one component results in the demise of the whole. In like manner, the Godhead contains three distinct persons: Father, Son,

and Holy Spirit. Each is God (Ephesians 4:6; Titus 2:13; Acts 5:3, 4), yet there is one God. The removal of one person destroys the unity of the whole.

Even the gospel story illustrates the inter-dependency of threes. The sanctuary had three places: the Courtyard, the Holy Place, and the Most Holy Place. There are three stages of salvation: justification, sanctification, and glorification. In Isaiah 6:3, the angels around God's throne cry "Holy, Holy, Holy" three times—once for the Father, once for the Son, and once for the Holy Spirit.

10 THE SOURCE OF MISUNDERSTANDING

Almost all of the Scriptures used by those who reject the trinity to portray Jesus as a "lesser god" spring from a basic failure to understand the incarnation. Jesus, God the Son, laid aside or veiled the full dimension of His divinity when He came to earth. How else could He live as God among men?

"God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned

sin in the flesh” (Romans 8:3).

“For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9).

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:5–8).

We also clearly see that before and after His incarnation, Jesus beams again with undimmed divine glory. “And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was” (John 17:5). “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour” (Hebrews 2:9).

If God the Son had not veiled His glory when He came to earth, man could not have endured His brilliant presence, much less learned from His example.

11 WHO OUTRANKS WHOM?

Let us now venture a little deeper onto sacred ground. As we consider the mysteries of the Godhead, we notice that there seems to be an order of authority concerning the three persons in the trinity. Keep in mind that while all three are the same in properties and attributes, and equal in power and glory, it appears that the Father is recognized as the ultimate authority. “And ye are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s” (1 Corinthians 3:23). “But I would have you know, that ... the head of Christ is God” (1 Corinthians 11:3). The Son constantly receives His glory, power, throne, and prerogatives as Judge from the Father (John 3:35; John 5:22). Indeed, it was God the Father that “gave” the Son. In fact, while it might not be wrong, we are never told to pray to Jesus or the Spirit—but instead to the Father in the name of the Son. Yet just because the Father seems to have supreme authority, it does not in any way diminish from the divinity of Jesus and the Spirit. That would be like saying that a corporal is less of a soldier than a sergeant.

Among the three members of the Godhead, we do not see a clamoring for pre-eminence, vying for recognition, or reveling in power. Instead, the exact opposite is true. In fact, the Father, Son, and Spirit always seem to be trying to outgive and glorify each other. The Father wants to glorify the Son. The Son lives to glorify the Father, and the Spirit lives to glorify the Father and Son (John 17:1, 5; John 16:14; John 13:31, 32).

12 A FRIEND OR FORCE?

It would be a mistake to leave this sublime subject without addressing an additional distortion to the teaching of the trinity. Another class of sincere Christians believes that while the Father and Son are truly distinct persons, they only see the Holy Spirit as a cosmic force or essence—an impersonal power conduit or vehicle to do the bidding of the Father and Son.

We can appreciate why the Holy Spirit seems to be the hardest member of the Godhead to visualize and define. Sometimes He is called the Holy Ghost, which leaves

people with a “spooky” image. The Scriptures compare Him to everything from wind and fire, to a dove, water, and even a defense attorney!

But as we consider the various features of the Holy Spirit, we can quickly see He has all the credentials of a separate and distinct, intelligent, individual being.

The Holy Spirit leads and guides. “However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth” (John 16:13 NKJV). It’s true that a map or GPS can lead you, but no one calls a map “he.” It would have been very easy for Jesus to simply say, “When it comes,” but Jesus called the Holy Spirit “He” more than 15 times. Why would God go to so much trouble to personify His own inherent power to the extent that it possessed emotions, thoughts, and speech independent of Himself?

The Holy Spirit also comforts. “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever” (John 14:16). I have never seen a lonely child run to a vacuum cleaner for an embrace—only intelligent beings can offer comfort. Jesus promised before His

ascension that He was sending another helper; paraclete is the Greek word that signifies a multi-sided personal ministry as counselor, consoler, advocate, helper, comforter, ally, and supporter (John 14:16, 17, 26; 15:26-27; 16:7-15). These are all traits that usually belong to a person or friend. If the Holy Spirit is merely God's active force, then John 16:7, 8 is nonsense: "It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world." It is obvious from this text that the Holy Spirit would be more personally present after Jesus ascended. If the Holy Spirit is mere energy, there is simply no explanation or logic to why He would not come unless Jesus left.

The Holy Spirit can even be grieved (Ephesians 4:30). Cars have many unique characteristics and idiosyncrasies. At times, they might even seem to have a "personality." But motor vehicles cannot be grieved. Nor can they speak, as the Holy Spirit does. "Then the Spirit said to Philip, 'Go near and overtake this chariot'" (Acts 8:29). Computer programs exist that can reproduce speech, but

they cannot create inspired thought. The Holy Scriptures were inspired by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21).

We also read in Revelation 1:4, 5, a prayer for grace and peace from the Father, the Spirit, and Jesus Christ. We must ask, would John have put the Spirit between the Father and the Son if he had not regarded the Spirit as a divine intelligence in the same sense as they are?

If the Holy Spirit is simply some divine force, then why is it even more offensive to blaspheme against the Holy Spirit, and even more fatal, than speaking against the Son? “Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come” (Matthew 12:31, 32 NKJV). By definition, blasphemy is “a contemptuous or profane act, utterance, or writing against God.” By this simple deduction, the Holy Spirit must be God! This is also why Peter said

that to lie to the Holy Spirit is to lie to God (Acts 5:3, 4).

The Holy Spirit can be a witness (Hebrews 10:15). In any court of the world, only living beings can be called witnesses. Finally, the Holy Spirit is said to have His own mind (Romans 8:27).

We can clearly see the Holy Spirit is not simply a force, but the third divine person of the Godhead. Though a spirit, He has all the characteristics of a person and individual. The Spirit is plainly portrayed as a being who speaks, teaches, guides, makes choices, witnesses, comforts, and can be grieved. “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all” (2 Corinthians 13:14 NKJV).

13 LOVE AT CALVARY

The truth of the triune God can also be found in the gospel itself. In essence, when we consider John, we read that God the Father so loved the world that He sent God the Son that we might be born of God the Spirit (John 3:8, 13, 16, 17).

But it is especially on Golgotha's hill that the doctrine of the trinity explodes with meaning and becomes more than denominational jousting. Before earth's creation, the triune God discussed the potential of man's rebellion and fall. Through the lens of divine foreknowledge, He saw the terror that sin's rape of the world would cause. And there, before man was formed, it was decided that Jesus would leave the throne of heaven and become humanity's substitute. Jesus was "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8; 1 Peter 1:19, 20).

14 A TEARING AT THE TRINITY

Another point to consider is that sin causes separation from the Creator (Isaiah 59:2). The iniquities of the human race were placed upon the Son of God (Isaiah 53:6). When Jesus hung on the cross, suffering for our sins, every fiber of His being was torn as the eternal relationship with His Father and Spirit was ripped apart. In agony He cried out, "My God [for the Father], my God [for the Spirit], why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46). If

there had been only one person in the Godhead, there would not have been this excruciating pain of separation to wring the life out of the heart of Jesus.

The real risk in the redemption plan, besides the loss of man, was the breakup of the Godhead. Had Jesus sinned, He would have been working at cross-purposes with the Spirit and His Father. Omnipotent good would have been pitted against omnipotent evil. What would have happened to the rest of creation? Whom would the unfallen universe see as right? One sin could have sent the Godhead and the universe spinning into cosmic chaos; the proportions of this disaster are staggering. Yet the Godhead was still willing to take this fragmenting risk for the salvation of man. This reveals the depth of God's amazing love.

15 CONCLUSION

Augustine, that great man of God, was once walking on the shore of an ocean while greatly perplexed about the doctrine of the trinity. As he meditated, he observed a little boy with a seashell running back and forth

from the waters edge, filling his shell, and then pouring it into a crab hole in the sand. “What are you doing, my little man?” asked Augustine.

“Oh,” replied the boy, “I am trying to put all the ocean out there in this hole.” Augustine had learned his lesson.

As he passed on, Augustine said, “That is what I am trying to do; I see it now. Standing on the shores of time, I am trying to get into this little finite mind things which are infinite.” Likewise, let us be content to let God know some things that we cannot yet know.

It would be pompous and preposterous to pretend that we understand everything about God. “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!” (Romans 11:33). If we could completely unpack Him like cracking some genetic code, He would cease to be God.

Nevertheless, there is much about God that is revealed for our blessing. “The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever” (Deuteronomy 29:29). What is revealed is that this teaching

of the trinity must be important to God. The ministry of Jesus both begins and ends with an emphasis on the three persons in the Godhead. The Father, Son, and Spirit are present at Jesus' baptism and when He ascends to heaven. Jesus commanded His followers to baptize in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The testimony of Scripture indicates that the Godhead can neither be separated into three Gods nor merged into one person. This three-in-one not only created us, but they love us and devised an amazing plan to save a lost world from sin to restore us to His presence in paradise.

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen” (2 Corinthians 13:14).

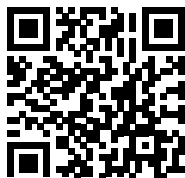


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