

fathom (and appreciate) an inkling of God's majesty, His might, and His dimensionality.<sup>3</sup> In theological terms, the God of the Bible is omniscient (all knowing), omnipotent (all powerful), omnipresent (everywhere present), and immutable (unchanging). Scripture also teaches that God is personal, pure love, pure light, holy, just, righteous, and awesome. In mathematical terms, the concept of the Trinity (three-in-one) would be expressed not as  $1 + 1 + 1 = 3$ , but rather as  $1 \times 1 \times 1 = 1$ .

## 4 THE PROGRESSIVE REVELATION OF THE TRINITARIAN DOCTRINE

The Old Testament presents the plurality within God's unity and anticipates the fuller New Testament teaching of the Trinity.

### The Old Testament

In the OT, we see: [1] The first reference to the Trinity is in the story of Creation. God (*Elohiym*) created the heavens and the earth (Gen. 1:1-3). *Elohiym* is a plural Hebrew noun for God, indicating compound unity. [2] God deliberates with Himself as a plural Being. The plural pronoun *us* is used in Genesis 1:26, 3:22, 11:7, and Isaiah 6:8. [3] The three Persons of the Trinity, including the Son/Messiah, are seen in Isaiah 48:16 and 61:1. (Compare this with Luke 4:16-21).<sup>4</sup> [4] The preincarnate Christ makes several appearances (called "Christophanies").<sup>5</sup> The Angel of the Lord is identified as God in Genesis 31:11, 13 and Exodus 3:2-5.

### The New Testament

In the NT, the Trinitarian doctrine becomes crystal clear.<sup>6</sup> A tri-unity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is consistently presented. [1] Some passages that state the Trinity specifically are: Matt. 3:13-17 (at Jesus' baptism); Matt. 28:19 (the Great Commission); and John 14:15-26 (Christ's teaching). [2] Some pas-

sages that affirm or imply the Trinity are: Acts 2:32-38 (apostle's sermon); 2 Cor. 13:14 (apostle's benediction); Gal. 4:4-6 (apostle's teaching); and Eph. 3:16-19 (apostle's prayer).<sup>7</sup> [3] First Corinthians 12:4-6 shows how the Persons of the Trinity interact to direct the ministry of the church. [4] Ephesians 1:1-14 describes how all three Persons relate to one another in redeeming mankind.<sup>8</sup>

### CONCLUSION

When we consider that God's triune Being is far greater than we can ever comprehend, we are humbled before Him.<sup>9</sup> When we consider God's sacrificial love for us, we are drawn to worship Him. **"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son [Jesus], that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life"** (John 3:16).

The Bible teaches that when we place our faith in Jesus Christ—who died on the cross and then returned to life—God grants us forgiveness of sin and eternity in heaven. We are given a new life born of the Spirit (John 3:3-6). The Holy Spirit comes to dwell within us, and we can have joyful fellowship with the Father and with His Son (1 John 1:3-4; 5:20; Rom. 8:11). Are you ready to call on the name of Jesus and have a personal relationship with the triune God?

**"HOLY, HOLY, HOLY;  
MERCIFUL AND MIGHTY! GOD IN THREE  
PERSONS, BLESSED TRINITY!"<sup>10</sup>**



### A PRAYER TO RECEIVE JESUS CHRIST

*"Father God, thank You for sending Your Son to die on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins. Thank You for raising Him from the dead so we can live with You eternally. I believe in Your Son, Jesus, and I receive Him now as my personal Lord and Savior. Thank You for forgiving my sins and for making me "a new creation in Christ" by Your Holy Spirit. Help me grow in my personal relationship with You, through Your Son. In Jesus' name, amen."*

COPIES AVAILABLE AT:

TRUE-WAY TRACTS®

P. O. Box 1258

San Juan Capistrano, CA (USA) 92693

[www.truewaytracts.com](http://www.truewaytracts.com)



REFERENCES: <sup>1</sup> Unger, Merrill F. *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*, Moody Press, ©1988. <sup>2</sup> Thiessen, Henry C. *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, Wm. Eerdmans Pub. ©2000. <sup>3</sup> Source unknown. <sup>4</sup> Barackman, Floyd H. *Practical Christian Theology*, Kregel Pub. ©1981. <sup>5</sup> Rhodes, Ron. *Christ Before the Manger*, Baker Book House, ©1992. <sup>6</sup> Morey, Robert. *The Trinity: Evidence and Issues*, World Bible Pub. ©1996. <sup>7</sup> Milne, Bruce. *Know the Truth*, InterVarsity Press, ©1998. <sup>8</sup> "Interaction within the Trinity" (a study aid), *The Open Bible* (NKJV), Thomas Nelson, Inc., ©1997. <sup>9</sup> Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, IVP and Zondervan Pub. ©1994. <sup>10</sup> "Holy! Holy! Holy!" Lyrics by Heber, Reginald, 1826, public domain.

All Scripture quotations in this publication are from the New King James Version. Copyright ©1982 by Thomas Nelson Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

## HOW CAN GOD BE THREE-IN-ONE?



by m.j. tyner, m.a.  
christian apologetics

biblical christianity



# An Overview of the Biblical Basis for the "Trinity" Doctrine

## INTRODUCTION

People often ask, "How can God exist as three Persons and yet be one God?" Others wonder, "Why do Christians believe in the Trinity when that term doesn't appear in the Bible?" Such questions about this essential Christian doctrine are vital. For if it is true that the Bible is the written revelation from God to mankind (as established by compelling evidences such as fulfilled Bible prophecy), then we would be wise to consider its teachings. Its messages include:

- *Misinterpreting the basic nature of God can lead to disastrous consequences.*
- *Those who embrace the truth of who God is, and receive His free gift of eternal life, will never perish.*
- *We can have a personal and loving relationship with the triune God, fulfilling the purpose for which we were created.*

*The doctrine of the Trinity is expressed throughout the pages of the Bible. It is essential to the understanding of the Scriptures, and "the glory of the gospel depends upon this truth."*

## 1 THE TRIUNE NATURE OF GOD

The Bible presents God as one Being, who exists in three distinguishable Persons—the Father, the Son,

and the Holy Spirit. All three Persons in the Godhead are coeternal, coexistent, and coequal. In other words, there are three "eternal distinctions" in the one divine essence.<sup>2</sup> The Son and the Spirit are subordinate in role to the Father, yet they are equal in essence. Of course, much about the complex nature of God remains a profound mystery. God is a unique, marvelous Being (Ex. 9:13–14; Jer. 10:6–7), incomprehensible to the finite human mind (Isa. 40:25–26; 55:8–9; Rom. 11:33). Surely, if God were small enough for us to understand, He wouldn't be big enough for us to worship.

### UNDERSTANDING THE TRINITY

While no symbol exists in the material universe that can adequately convey the Trinity (tri-unity of God), perhaps the nearest one is displayed here. It is made of one continuous line, representing the one eternal Godhead with three distinct Persons. The Bible teaches that all three Personalities (the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) are interconnected, sharing one divine essence. [Note: The Triquetra symbol below was used by the early church to represent the Trinity. It appears in many NKJV Bibles.]



## 2 A FIVE-STEP SCRIPTURAL DEFENSE OF THE TRINITY

The following five steps outline the Bible's clear teaching of the Trinity. They lead to the conclusion that there are three Persons in the one Godhead. It is extremely important to accept what is directly revealed in the Bible about the nature of God (leading to orthodoxy), rather than to read into the text what is not there to aid in human understanding (leading to heresy). Here is what Scripture teaches:

### STEP 1. THERE IS ONLY ONE GOD.

Numerous explicit statements in the Old and New

Testaments declare there is only one God of the entire universe. The Bible emphasizes that God is one (monotheism).

**Old Testament Examples:** Deut. 4:35, 39; 6:4 (the "Shema"); 32:39; 2 Sam. 7:22; 1 Kings 8:60; Isa. 43:10–11; 45:5–6.

**New Testament Examples:** Mark 12:29–32; Rom. 3:30; 16:27; 1 Cor. 8:4; Eph. 4:6; James 2:19; Jude 25.

### STEP 2. THERE ARE THREE PERSONS CALLED "GOD."

The Father is called "God"; the Son is called "God"; and the Holy Spirit is called "God."

**The Father is "God."** John 17:3; 1 Cor. 8:6; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:3; 1 Thess. 1:1.

**The Son is "God."** Isa. 9:6; Matt. 1:22–23; John 1:1–3; 8:58–59; Heb. 1:8.

**The Holy Spirit is "God."** Gen. 1:2; Isa. 61:1; Acts 5:3–4; 2 Cor. 3:17–18.

### STEP 3. EACH OF THE THREE PERSONS IS DISTINCT.

Jesus is not the Father; Jesus is not the Holy Spirit; the Father is not the Holy Spirit. Yet there is a "three in oneness."

**Jesus is not the Father.** John 1:1; 3:16; 14:6–11; 17:5.

**Jesus is not the Holy Spirit.** Luke 3:21–22; John 13–14; 14:16–17; 16:7.

**The Father is not the Holy Spirit.** John 14:26; 15:26; Rom. 8:26–27.

**There is a "three in oneness."** Matt. 3:16–17; 28:19; John 14:26; 15:26; 2 Cor. 13:14; Gal. 4:4–6; 1 John 5:7.

### STEP 4. EACH OF THE THREE PERSONS POSSESSES ALL THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD.

Each of the three Persons is: (1) omniscient, (2) omnipotent, (3) omnipresent, (4) eternal, (5) holy, (6) creator.

**The Father possesses all six of these attributes:** (1) Ps. 147:5; Heb. 4:13; 1 John 3:20; (2) Job 42:2; Matt. 19:26; Rev. 19:6; (3) 1 Kings 8:27; Jer. 23:23–24; (4) Gen. 21:33; Ps. 102:24–28; Isa. 40:28; (5) Josh. 24:19; Ps. 99:5, 9; and (6) Gen. 1:1; Ps. 102:24–25.

**The Son possesses all six of these attributes:** (1) John 2:23–25; 16:30; 21:17; Acts 1:24; (2) Matt. 28:18; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3; (3) Matt. 18:20; 28:19–20; 2 Cor. 13:5; (4) John 1:1; 17:5, 24; (5) Mark 1:24; Acts 3:14; 4:27, 30; and (6) John 1:1–3; Col. 1:16.

**The Holy Spirit possesses all six of these attributes:** (1) John 14:26; 16:12–13; 1 Cor. 2:10–11; (2) Luke 1:35; (3) Ps. 139:7–10; (4) Heb. 9:14; (5) Rom. 1:4; and (6) Job 33:4; Ps. 104:30.

### STEP 5. CONCLUSION

Therefore, when considering all these directly revealed biblical teachings on the nature of God, the clear conclusion is that there are three Persons in one Godhead.

### A FAINT ANALOGY OF THE TRINITY

H<sub>2</sub>O can exist as water, ice, or steam (liquid, solid, or vapor). These three forms do not alter the nature of H<sub>2</sub>O. All three remain H<sub>2</sub>O. And all three can exist simultaneously. Likewise, the one triune Being consists of three simultaneous Personalities—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—sharing one divine nature or essence.



### 3 GRASPING A GLIMPSE OF THE TRINITY

It is mind-boggling and futile for finite man to try to grasp the infinite Creator. However, if we meditate on biblical terms that describe the attributes of God, then combine and compound them, we can begin to