

Systematic Theology session 20
The Doctrine of God, "I Am Who I Am," Part 14

- The doctrine of the Trinity.
 - The definition of the Trinity.
 - The Belgic Confession of 1559: "According to this truth and this Word of God, we believe in one only God, who is the one single essence, in which are three persons, really, truly, and eternally distinct, according to their incommunicable properties; namely, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost."
 - The Westminster Confession of Faith of 1646: "There is but one only, living, and true God..." "In the unity of the Godhead there be three Persons of one substance, power, and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. The Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son."
 - There is only one God, a single, undivided divine essence or nature, with the one God being distinguished in three divine persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
 - The definitions of "essence" and "person."
 - "Essence" or "nature" is what makes something what it is.
 - God is one single and undivided divine essence or nature. The attributes of God that we've been studying belong to and describe that single, undivided nature.
 - All of the attributes of deity belong to each of the Persons of the Trinity.
 - A "person" is self-conscious and is capable of relationship. None of the Persons of the Trinity are an impersonal force; they are in relationship with one another.
 - The Persons of the Trinity are one God, not three gods. The persons are to be distinguished, but they are not divided as though they were three gods. The three Persons are not mixed together as though they were a single composite person.
 - Each of the Persons of the Trinity are involved in every act of creation, providence, and redemption. This principle is known as "inseparable operation." We don't find any of the Persons of the Trinity with an agenda of their own, and acting independently of the other two Persons.
 - The Persons of the Trinity have one will, and act with one power.
 - But, there is an order in which the Persons do the inseparable operations of creation, providence, and redemption, which can be phrased as "from the Father, through the Son, by the Spirit." This phrasing expresses the "economic Trinity."
- Heresies that deny the truth of the Trinity.
 - *Arianism*: The heresy that the Son, or the Son and the Spirit, are only the first created and highest-ranking creatures created by the Father. The heresy was fought against by Athanasius, and was condemned by the Council of Nicea in 325 and the Second Ecumenical Council in 381, which produced the Nicene Creed. The heresy is still with us today with the Jehovah's Witnesses.
 - *Sabellianism*: Also known as Modalism. The heresy that there is only one person in the godhead, who presents himself in three different ways, at different times, and for different purposes. This heresy is still around, in Oneness Pentecostal churches.
 - *Tritheism*: The heresy that asserts that there are three gods. This heresy is still with us, in Mormonism.