

DISCIPLESHIP CHALLENGE
THE DOCTRINE OF GOD
THE TRINITY-PART 2

INTRODUCTION

In *Matthew 28:19-20* as Jesus gave the Great Commission to His disciples, it is quite clear that people are to be baptized “*in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*” indicating that **there are three personalities in the Godhead**. There is therefore *tri-unity* or *trinity*.

In many other passages in the Scriptures **two or more members of the Godhead are mentioned as equal**. However, every cult in some way usually denies the reality of the *Trinity*. These cultic belief systems have been around since the first century.

It is quite difficult to comprehend **the concept of three personalities and yet unity in the Godhead** because **it violates our own finite intellect**. Cultists will say that the *Trinity* does not make sense but *1 Corinthians 2:14* says that unbelievers cannot understand spiritual matters because they are spiritually discerned.

Our perception of the mechanics of the *Trinity* is limited but **we should not expect human logic alone to cope with this concept**. WE are finite creatures and **our understanding of the great and infinite Creator must be accepted by faith in the Revelation provided in God’s Word!**

God has decided to reveal Himself to man in this way and so this is the way in which He ought to be understood.

Trinity and *unity* have their own characteristics:

Trinity and Unity

Trinity and *unity* have their own relationships in the Character of God. There is **unity in character** but **trinity in personalities**. As you go through the Bible **where you have the character of God being expressed you have unity, where you have personalities dealing with mankind you have trinity**. We can see the *unity* of the character of God in the different ways in which God has revealed Himself to man. In the case of *Trinity* however, we must be careful with illustrations and concepts as it is easy to go into heresy by taking it one step too far.

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There are obviously many important reasons behind this. **In eternity we will understand this fully**, but here and now, as it has been revealed this way to us, we have the obligation to try our best to understand it’s significance for us. *Trinity* and *unity* have their corresponding words in the essence of God. *Unity* – *essence or character*. *Trinity* – *personality*.

God is ONE IN ESSENCE but revealed as THREE IN PERSON! This is especially true of times when one person of the Godhead is dealing with man. This doctrine actually assists us in understanding God.

It is very important that the examples we use accurately reflect this doctrine otherwise some may be led astray. Both the Mormons and the Jehovah's Witnesses have a false view in this area and will confuse believers who are not well taught and have not thought this through thoroughly.

We’ve already said that the word *Trinity* as such, is not found in the Bible, nor are other related doctrinal terms. Nevertheless **the doctrine itself grows out of the Scriptures and therefore it is a Biblical teaching**.

From the Scriptures we see that:

- [a] God is Spirit
- [b] God has manifested Himself to man at different times in different ways
- [c] The final manifestation through the Lord Jesus Christ is physical and visible
- [d] Man saw glimpses of God through all these manifestations.

There is a problem of comprehension because we are physical and God is spirit. We must worship God in spirit and in truth. We are to see this reality about our Creator, Saviour, and Lord through the means and terms in which it is revealed.

For example, in Scripture where we see “*the Angel of the LORD*”, He is clearly a manifestation of God and associated with God.

There are many names of God, the two main ones being *Elohim* and *Jehovah*.

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Elohim is in the plural which shows *unity* and *trinity*. Often we will find both the singular and plural together in the same verse.

Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ who are growing do not tend to have general problems with the *Trinity*. The people who do have problems with the *Trinity* generally have problems with most other doctrines. This points the lack of spiritual understanding which generally points to a lost condition.

False Concepts

The theological perspective from where the so called Jehovah's witnesses, Muslims and the Mormons come from is that **they say the Father is said to have created the Son** (Jesus is shown to be a servant, they see Jesus' beginning as being at creation rather than seeing Him as the Creator, or they see His beginning at Bethlehem) and so therefore **they do not see Him as being co-equal and co-eternal. This is false.**

The second concept is one of "*procession*" where one sent the other, the Father sent the Son and the Son sent the Holy Spirit. They therefore say we do not have equality we have a hierarchy. This is not true from a Biblical basis when all the texts of the New Testament are compared with one another.

The Early Church

There were a number of people in the early Church who had a Unitarian outlook. The Church in those times did not formulate any clear statement concerning the Trinity until the fourth century.

Theodotus of Byzantium about 210 A.D. viewed Jesus as a man who was given special powers by the Holy Spirit at His baptism. Another group at about the same time concluded that the Father was incarnated in the Son and suffered in the Son.

Arius [250-336 A.D.] from Alexandria distinguished between the One Eternal God from the Son who was generated by the Father and thus had a beginning.

He was opposed by Athanasius who held to three persons in the Trinity of one essence.

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It was as a result of controversy in the Church that the teaching had to be clarified resulting in the Nicene Creed. In 381 A.D. at the Council of Constantinople this concept was given in its final form.

Each Person In Trinity Is God!

We were seeing last week where each one is called God! We saw the Father and the Son were called God., Now let's pick up where we left off.

3. Holy Spirit – (*Acts 5:3-4*)

B. Each One Has The Attributes Of God!

Each one is eternal, omnipotent (almighty), omniscient (all-wise), and omnipresent (everywhere present).

1. Father – 2 *Timothy 1:9; Mark 14:36; Matthew 24:36; Acts 17:27.*

2. Son – *Hebrews 13:8; Matthew 28:18; Colossians 2:3; Matthew 18:20.*

3. Holy Spirit – *Hebrews 9:14; Romans 15:19; 1 Corinthians 2:10-11; Psalm 139:7-10.*

C. Each One Performs The Works Of God!

1. In Creation.

a. Father – *Revelation 4:11.*

b. Son – *Colossians 1:16.*

c. Holy Spirit – *Job 33:4.*

2. In Redemption. *John 3:6-18.*

a. Father – 1 *John 4:14.*

b. Son – *Galatians 3:13.*

c. Holy Spirit – *Hebrews 9:14.*

So, all persons of the Godhead are involved in Redemption.

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- D. Both the Son and the Spirit are involved in Revelation.**
(John 1:18, 16:13)
- E. Prayer is seen to involve the Trinity with petitions addressed to the Father, in the power of the Spirit and through the Son.**
(John 14:14, Ephesians 1:6, 2:18, 6:18)
- F. Baptism is in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.**
(Matthew 28:19,20)