

Welcome to Grace Christian Fellowship

Jesus is Lord! (Romans 10:9)

Topic: Review of the doctrine of the Trinity

- All verses are from the **ESV** unless otherwise stated
- [Brackets] are used to show other, alternative translations

1

The doctrine of the Trinity

This doctrine started being developed the final night of Jesus' life.
(Hinted at in the OT - starting with Genesis 1; but described in John)

It started taking shape over the next couple of centuries.

Was largely settled early 4th century.

Is still debated today, even among mainstream scholars.

2

The doctrine of the Trinity

The Bible states there is one God who is Creator, greater than all other gods. The biblical name is YHWH (we think this was pronounced as Yahweh).

The Bible mentions the Spirit as being called God / Lord (Yahweh)

When we read the New Testament we see Jesus who is also called "God" and identified as Yahweh.

At times the Son is said to be in subjection to the Father.

What is going on??!!

Believers have been trying to understand what the Bible means and who Jesus is, ever since.

3

The doctrine of the Trinity

The doctrine, as stated in the early church, is considered to be foundational, some say fundamental.

My opinion: it is very important to know who Jesus is but ...

- Understanding all the details of the Trinity is not essential to salvation.
- Believing in a particular form of the doctrine is not essential to salvation.

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The doctrine of the Trinity

My preferred definition
(trying to avoid word debates by not using either the word 'God' or the word 'person')

1 -
In the One Creator are three, distinct testifiers (persons): Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Who each equally and uniquely possesses Godness (the nature of being God).
[A testifier is able to know things and initiate communication of information to others]

2 (debated) -
The Son and the Holy Spirit are eternally subordinate to the Father in function and rank (not nature). Called EFS (Eternal Functional Subordination) or "Complementarianism".

All of this is based on Scripture.

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The doctrine of the Trinity

How does this make sense to say there is **One** God but **three** testifiers (or persons)? How do we picture this?

Genesis 2:24
Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and **they shall become one flesh**.

Genesis 5:1-2
¹ This is the book of the generations of Adam. When God created **man**, he made **him** in the likeness of God. ² Male and female he created **them**, and he blessed **them** and named **them** Man [or "Adam"] when **they** were created.

Thus two persons were called "Man" (or "Adam") by God.
Two can share the same "name".

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The doctrine of the Trinity

Mark 10:6-9; (Matthew 19:4-6)

⁶ But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' ⁷ 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, ⁸ and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are **no longer two** but one flesh. ⁹ What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."

This discussion was with Jesus who comments on the issue of divorce. Divorce was a breaking of the covenant AND God intended that people not try to divide this covenant. All other people are to relate to this couple as if they were a single thing that should not be divided. **Before** this, others would relate to the man and woman as individual entities. The woman's family would relate to her independently of the man. But now, all others must relate to her as joined to the man into a single entity. They are NO LONGER two.

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The doctrine of the Trinity

"In the garden was the woman, the woman was **with the man**, and the **woman was Man**."

Do you understand this?

Is this saying that the woman was **THE man** who was in the garden?
Or ... is this saying that the woman was **a man**?

So what is this saying?

The woman was **not the** man with whom she was with.
The woman was in the garden with a different person, the man.
There were two persons.
Also ... the woman was **not A man**. She had her own unique attributes.

So what was the Woman? She was a distinct person BUT she shared the same humanity with the other person.

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The doctrine of the Trinity

Now, do you understand this:

John 1:1

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

The Word was **not** *the* God with whom he was with.
The Word was in the beginning with a different person, God (the Source of all authority).
There were two persons.

Also ... the Word was **not A God**. He had his own unique attributes.
(The Son, the Sent One, the perfect Representative, the Inheritor, the Mediator.)

So what was the Word? He was a distinct person BUT shared the same Deity, nature, with the other person, the Father.

The Father and Son are to be viewed as One thing. They are not to be viewed as two entities that can act independently. We are to relate to them as a single God and must not try to divide them, even though they are distinct (not 'separate') persons.

So, if you can understand how Adam & Eve are one flesh, you can understand the Trinity.

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The doctrine of the Trinity

Other biblical examples of multiple persons unified in One:

John 17:11 — 22 *NLT*

¹¹ Now I am departing from the world; they are staying in this world, but I am coming to you. Holy Father, you have given me your name; **now protect them by the power of your name so that they will be united just as we are.**

...
²⁰ "I am praying **not only for these disciples** but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. ²¹ I pray that **they will all be one, just as you and I are one — as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us** so that the world will believe you sent me.

The disciples were to be united ... "just as (*kathos*) you and I are one". This unity that the disciples were to have is the same kind of unity the Father and Son have. **Thus God is a unified plurality of persons.**
How do we know this? Because Jesus said so.

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The doctrine of the Trinity

Other biblical examples of multiple persons in One:

Isaiah 43:10

"You are **my witnesses**," declares the LORD (Yahweh), "**and my servant whom I have chosen**, ...

The true followers of Yahweh were a body of witnesses (plural) and yet a single servant.

Why? Because the body was to be united under God. All outsiders were to relate to this nation as a single entity. It was not divisible. Yet within this nation they were all a plurality of witnesses to testify that Yahweh was the True God.

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Concluding comments

What does this all mean??

The Bible is revealing to humanity that we are commanded to **relate** to a **single** Spirit Entity, the One Creator. This Creator is composed of three persons / testifiers. We are not to divide this Creator and make 3 separate Creators, nor 3 separate Gods. These three are eternal and unified in glory, character, nature, intent, ethics, and love.

The Father sends the **Son** to be The representative, the Word, to all creatures. Sometimes the Son represents "God" (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) or sometimes represents just the Father. The Son is the redeemer of humanity. He is King, High Priest, and Prophet.

The Father sends the **Spirit** to creatures to instruct, convict, lead, reveal things to humanity.

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Concluding comments

This is nothing like the polytheist beliefs of separate gods who disagree, fight, have different natures, different goals, different worship styles, different ethics. None of whom can create the universe or life or resurrect the dead.

Our God has no such divisions. The Father is unseen, the source of all authority, the final-decision maker, the Sender. The Son and Spirit are the Sent. They have subordinate roles and rank. All three are in perfect harmony.

Next time ...

1 Peter