

The Trinity

Is the Tri-unity of the three Person God-head
a real biblical doctrine?

Do we worship three Gods or one Three-Person God?

One of the elements of the biblical doctrine of God is the trinity. While the word trinity is not found in the Bible, it is best understood as a contraction for the biblical concept of the "tri-unity" of God. The tri-unity of God is the doctrine which affirms that there is one and only one God, but within His oneness there are three distinct yet inseparable persons.

It is easy to establish biblically that there is only one God. Many verses affirm this truth, emphatically contradicting all religions that encourage the belief in more than one god.

Deuteronomy 6:4

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD.

Deuteronomy 4:35

Unto thee it was shewed, that thou mightest know that the LORD he is God; there is none else beside him.

Isaiah 44:6

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.

Isaiah 45:5-6

I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me, I am the LORD, and there is none else.

1 Corinthians 8:4-6

As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and there is none other God but one. For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.

It is equally easy to establish biblically that God exists in three distinct yet inseparable persons emphatically contradicting those religions which deny the deity of Jesus Christ and the distinct personhood of the Holy Spirit.

The Father

God is a spirit in substance (John 4:24). He is so purely glorious that no man can look upon Him (Exodus 33:20; 1 Timothy 6:16). He is a complete personality with a mind (Exodus 3:7), emotion (Ephesians 4:30; Zephaniah 3:17), and will (John 6:38). He is self-existent (Exodus 3:14); infinite in relation to size (2

Chronicles 2:6; Psalms 139:7ff); and eternal in relation to time (Genesis 21:33; Psalms 90:2; Isaiah 57:15).

He is

omnipresent (Psalm 139:7-10)
omniscient (Hebrews 4:13; Psalm 147:5)
omnipotent (Genesis 17:1)
immutable (Malachi 3:6; James 1:17)
holy (Leviticus 11:44)
righteous and just (Romans 2:4-5)
good (Matthew 19:17)
love (1 John 4:8)
merciful (Ephesians 2:4)
gracious (Ephesians 2:8)
true ((John 17:3)
and longsuffering (2 Peter 3:9)

He is the creator of all things (Genesis 1:1; Isaiah 40:25-26; Amos 4:13). He is sovereign and rules over all that is. (1 Chronicles 29:11; Daniel 4:35; Ephesians 1:11; Psalm 33:10; Ephesians 4:6).

Along with all His multiple attributes as God, He is called the Father. In relationship to mankind, He is the Father of us all because He made us (Malachi 2:10). In relationship to believers, He is our Father because He gave us life in the new birth (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6). In relationship to the three Persons within the Godhead (Acts 17:29; Romans 1:20; Colossians 2:9), He is the Father (Matthew 28:19). This last is an eternal role which He has always possessed, each person in the trinity being eternally as they are, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Isaiah 9:6).

The Deity of Jesus Christ

1. The direct statements regarding His deity.

The Bible clearly teaches that Jesus Christ existed before He was born to Mary in Bethlehem. Jesus Himself said, *Before Abraham was, I am* (John 8:58). He also declared that he shared glory with the Father before the world was (John 17:5).

In His incarnation (when He assumed human nature and was born in human flesh), Jesus Christ became the one unique Person to possess two natures, human and divine. As a man, he possessed all the elements of a true human being: body (John 2:21), soul (John 12:27), and spirit (Luke 23:46). In His human flesh He experienced all the characteristics and limitations of a normal human being: hungering (Matthew 4:2), sleeping (Matthew 8:24), and weeping (John 11:35). However, He was entirely sinless in His humanity (1 John 3:5; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:22).

When He took on Himself human nature for the purpose of the work of redemption, Jesus Christ maintained His divine nature. He is clearly described as being God and as possessing all the attributes of God.

He is

eternal (John 1:1; Revelation 1:11)
omnipresent (Colossians 1:27)

omnipotent (Hebrews 1:3)
omniscient (Colossians 2:3)
true (John 14:6)
righteous (1 John 2:1)
good (Acts 10:38 and Luke 18:19)
holy (John 12:41 with Isaiah 6:3)
pure (Luke 4:34)
love (John 13:34)
gracious (2 Corinthians 8:9)
merciful (Hebrews 2:17)
longsuffering (1 Peter 2:18-24)
sovereign (Acts 10:36)
immutable (Hebrews 1:10-12, 13:8)
and self-existent (John 5:26; Colossians 1:16-17).

He did all the work of God in creation (John 1:3). He has the power to forgive sins as only God does (Luke 5:20-24). He has every right to claim to be God because He is, always has been, and always will be God.

Philippians 2:5-6

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.

John 1:1

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

Matthew 1:23

Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

2. The testimony of His deity.

One of the most profound testimonies of the deity of Jesus Christ comes from John in his Gospel record chapter 12. John records how Jesus was talking to the people about His crucifixion (verses 32-33). The people responded with a question, *We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of man?* (verse 34). Jesus answered their question by describing Himself as the light shining in darkness and invited them to believe in Him. He then left the people and hid himself from them (verses 35-36).

At this point in the text, John offers a commentary about the nature of Jesus' identity. He said in verses 37-41,

But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said

Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.

John testifies that the prophet Isaiah (Esaias) saw the glory of Jesus Christ and spoke of Him. He cites two statements that John made to support this. The first statement – *Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?* (John 12:38) – was made by Isaiah in Isaiah 53:1. This directly connects Jesus Christ to the redemptive work of the Messiah as recorded in that marvelous chapter. The second statement – *He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them* (John 12:40) – was made by Isaiah in Isaiah 6:10, in that glorious chapter where Isaiah saw the LORD (Jehovah God) sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up! This clearly identifies Jesus Christ as the Jehovah God who sat upon the throne of glory in heaven from eternity past!

This amazing eternal Son of God *made Himself of no reputation, and took on 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* [though He was an inseparable part of the Godhead] *and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross* (Philippians 2:7-8; Hebrews 2:9-18). He arose triumphantly because He is the resurrection and the life (John 11:25) and no grave could hold Him. And while He sits at the right hand of the throne of God the Father in heaven (Hebrews 12:2) representing the firstfruits of the resurrection for the people on earth who believe in Him (1 Corinthians 15:20,23), He ever remains the eternal, changeless, Son of God, inseparably part of the triune Godhead (Revelation 21:6, 22:13).

The Distinct Personhood of the Holy Spirit

In establishing the truth of the tri-unity of God, it is not only necessary to show the deity of Jesus Christ, but also the distinct personhood of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not just an extension of the Father's presence. He is not an impersonal force emanating from the Father as He sits on the throne. The Holy Spirit is a distinct person, yet equally inseparable from the Godhead as is the Son.

1. The elements of the Holy Spirit's personality.

Every person has three defining elements of personality. The Holy Spirit exhibits all three of these: mind (1 Corinthians 2:10-11) showing His ability to think, emotion (Ephesians 4:30) showing His ability to feel, and will (1 Corinthians 12:11) showing His ability to make choices and decisions.

2. His display of divine attributes.

The Holy Spirit is also described as possessing divine attributes. He has life and can generate life in others (Romans 8:2; John 3:5-6).

He is

eternal (Hebrews 9:14)
omnipresent (Psalm 139:7-13; 1 Corinthians 6:19)
omniscient (1 Corinthians 2:10-11; John 16:13)
omnipotent (Job 33:4; Psalm 104:30; Genesis 1:2)
true (John 14:17; John 15:26)
holy (Romans 1:4)

righteous (Romans 8:4)
gracious (Hebrews 10:29)
love (Romans 5:5; 15:30)
glorious (1 Peter 4:14)
sovereign (Daniel 4:35; 1 Corinthians 12:6,11)
and wise (1 Corinthians 12:8; Isaiah 11:2; John 16:13 and 14:26).

He participated in the work of creation (Genesis 1:26,27;
John 33:4).

The Holy Spirit is one of the three distinct persons in the tri-unity of the Godhead and is fully God even as are the Father and the Son (Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14).

The Trinity Expressed in the Old and New Testaments

1. Statements about the Trinity in the Old Testament.

The concept of the tri-unity of God is not just a New Testament concept. There are places in the Old Testament that testify of the three persons in the Godhead.

In Genesis 1:26, God said, *Let us make man in our image....* Who was God talking to when He said “us” and “our”? The word in the Hebrew used for God in this verse is the word “Elohim.” It is the plural form of “El.” God uses the plural form of the word to refer to Himself because He consists of three distinct persons.

In Deuteronomy 6:4 it says, *Hear, O Israel: The LORD [Jehovah] our God [Elohim] is one LORD [Jehovah].* The word one in this verse is the word “echad.” It suggests the sense of a composite one as opposed to a numerical one. The one plural God is a composite of three distinct, yet inseparably linked persons.

All three persons are identified in Isaiah 48:16. *Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I: and now the Lord God [the Father], and his spirit [the Holy Spirit], hath sent me [the Son].*

They are also identified together in Isaiah 61:1. *The spirit of the Lord God [the Holy Spirit] is upon me; because the LORD [the Father] hath anointed me [the Son] to preach good tidings to the meek....*

2. Statements about the Trinity in the New Testament.

The New Testament also contains evidence of the three persons of the Godhead. They are identified distinctly in Matthew 3:16-17, *and Jesus [the Son], when he was baptized, went up straight way out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him and he saw the Spirit of God [the Holy Spirit] descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: and lo a voice from heaven [the Father] saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*

Other references to the tri-unity of God in the New Testament include Matthew 28:19, John 14:26, John 15:26, 2 Corinthians 13:14, Ephesians 4:4-6, 1 Peter 1:2, and Jude 1:20-21.

3. The fulness of God.

Another truth reinforces the inseparable connection of the three persons of the Godhead and at the same time affirms the concept of the tri-unity of God. Colossians 2:9 states that in Jesus Christ dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. The word “dwelleth” is in the present tense, yet it is written after the resurrection and ascension of Christ. As Jesus Christ sits on the right hand of the throne of God the Father in heaven in His glorified humanity, he still possesses all the fulness of the Godhead.

The Holy Spirit also possesses all the fulness of the Godhead which is evidenced by the effect of His indwelling the bodies of believers. The bodies of believers are called the temple of the Holy Spirit who indwells us at the time of our new birth (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Jesus Christ promised before He left earth that as He departed from the earth, God the Father would send the Holy Spirit to abide with us (John 15:16-26). One wonderful and unique blessing for believers in the Church of Jesus Christ is the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13; 4:30). In addition, Scripture teaches us that by virtue of the Holy Spirit’s presence in us, we also have the Father in us (Ephesians 4:6) and we have the Son in us (2 Corinthians 13:5). The Holy Spirit must also, then, possess the fulness of God since by His indwelling us all three members of the Godhead are present in us.

The Scriptures show that the three distinct persons in the Godhead are inseparably linked together by explaining that fulness of the Godhead exists in each distinct member of the Godhead. This means that though there are three distinct persons, there is only one God. We do not worship three Gods. We worship one God. We are monotheistic. But our God is so unique that He consists of three distinct persons – distinct yet inseparably linked together.

Conclusion

You shake your head and say, I do not understand how three distinct persons can be inseparably linked together and therefore exist as only one God. I do not understand it either. No one can understand it. God is so different from us human beings that it is impossible for us to fully understand Him. He is mysterious and His tri-unity is one of those mysterious elements that causes us to stand amazed at His uniqueness of being.

It is not necessary for us to understand the tri-unity of God for us to believe it. The scriptural documentation is provided above. Let the Bible speak for itself. If it is in truth the Word of God, let it effectually work in you to believe this wonderful mystery about God.

The tri-unity of God is crucial to our salvation. If Jesus Christ is not God, He could not redeem us. If God the Father is not God, He could not justify us. If the Holy Spirit is not God, He could not regenerate us. But thanks be to God, that the Three-In-One worked in harmony to create us and give us life and to save us and give us life eternal.