

The Trinity

One God, Three Persons; Three Persons, One God

- We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.
- And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, light of light, very God of very God, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father
- And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified.

Two Weeks of the Trinity

- This week: Who God is in himself
- Next week: Who God is for us and for our salvation
- How many of you have ever had two sermons on the Trinity, much less back-to-back?

The Objectives of the Two Weeks of the Trinity

- The Trinity is the deepest, “most eternal” truth about God.
- The Christian God is an eternal communion within himself.
- God is “one” but never “alone.”
- This communion is the basis for both creation and salvation.
- The “end goal” of salvation is participation in the very life of God.

The “Seven Truths” of the Trinity

- There is one God
- The Father is God
- The Son is God
- The Spirit is God
- The Father is not the Son
- The Son is not the Spirit
- The Spirit is not the Son

The Trinity in the Bible

Old Testament

Is the Trinity in the Old Testament?

- First, remember that the Bible is God's word in human language.
- Thus, there are two "authors" in the writing of Scripture—the various human authors, and the one divine author.
- From the perspective of the human authors, the answer is likely "no," since the human authors of the OT presumably knew nothing of the Trinity.
- From the perspective of the divine author, the answer is certainly "yes."
- So the answer is yes, but only visible in hindsight—more on this later.

Genesis 1:1: “In the beginning God created...”

- The noun translated “God” is “Elohim,” a plural noun. The “-im” sound at the end of a Hebrew noun works like the “-s” at the end of an English noun.
- The verb translated “created” is “bara,” which is a singular verb.
- As in English, it is bad grammar to have a plural noun matched up with a singular verb. “We goes” is not proper English. Neither is this proper Hebrew. Yet, there it is, inspired and all.
- In the creation of the world, we have a singular action with distinct actors. Hmmmmm.....

Genesis 1:1-3

- God created the heavens and the earth (1:1).
- The Spirit of God hovered (brooded) over the face of the waters (1:2).
- And God said... (1:3 with John 1:1).
- Here are the “multiples” in the “Elohim” performing the singular act (creating).

Genesis 1:26 “And God said ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...’”

- Again, here “God” is “Elohim.”
- Let “us” Who is the “us?” Who is the “our?”
- Angels?
- “Plurality of majesty?”
- The “royal we?”
- The persons of the Godhead?

Genesis 3:22: “And the LORD God said,
‘Behold, the man is become as one of us...’”

- “Yahweh Elohim” is now the subject.
- “as one of us” can’t be angels or the royal we.
- There is a plurality evident in this “Yahweh Elohim”
- Lots of other examples of the plurality: namely
- “Holy Holy Holy is the LORD (Yahweh) of Hosts” of Isaiah 6:3
- “Hear, O Israel, the LORD (Yahweh) is our God (Elohim), the LORD (Yahweh) is one.” of Deuteronomy 6:4.
- Many others

Plurality Becomes Polytheism (Idolatry)

- As the OT progresses, we see God's people dabble in, and succumb to, idolatry over and over again.
- Babel
- Canaan
- Egypt
- The Ba'als and Asherah
- Finally, captivity to Assyria and Babylon

Captivity Ends Israel's Polytheistic Idolatry

- The Jews never again chased after the gods of the pagans.
- But I think they lost sight of the plurality in God, because their Messiah was coming, who was
 - Mighty God (Is 9:6)
 - Immanuel (God with us) (Is 7:14)
 - From old, from everlasting (Micah 5:2)
 - “Oh God” (Ps 45:6)

The Trinity in the Bible

New Testament - Jesus

Jesus does things only God can do.

- He raised the dead (He is the Lord of life and death)
- He made the blind see (He controls living processes)
- He calmed the storm (He is Lord of nature)
- He created food out of nothing (He controls the elements)
- He walked on water (He is Lord of even gravity)
- He walked through a wall (He controls subatomic physics)
- He forgave sins (Only the offended—God—could forgive the offender)
- He cast out demons (He controlled the spirit world)

Jesus says things only God can say

- “I am in the Father and the Father is in me” (oneness with God)
- “Which one of you convicts me of sin?” (He was sinless)
- “All power in heaven and earth is given to me” (He has all power)
- “I AM” (says he is God himself)
- “But I say to you” (He is the real Moses)
- “I am the bread of life”
- “I am the way. I am the truth. I am the life.”

New Testament Authors Called Him God

- John 1:1, 14, 18
- Philippians 2
- Colossians 1
- “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God”
- “My Lord and my God”
- “Prepare the way of the Lord”
- “The King of the Jews”
- Etc., etc.

Jesus died, rose again, and ascended

- These actions vindicate what he said and did, as well as what was said about him.
- He is truly God, even while truly man.
- He is not the Father, because the Father sends him and he prays to the Father.
- But he is every bit God as the Father is, and we have his words, actions, testimonies of the witnesses, and his resurrection and ascension as confirmation of it.

The Trinity in the Bible

New Testament: The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit in the Life of Jesus

- The Spirit “overshadows” Mary just as he “broods” over the waters.
- The testimonies of Elizabeth, Simeon, and Anna
- The three Persons at Jesus’ baptism
- The Spirit given “without measure” (John 3:34) to Jesus

The Holy Spirit as Jesus' "Other Self" John 14:16

- Jesus refers to the Spirit as “another comforter” (“allos paraklhtos”)
- Jesus is the “original” comforter
- The Spirit is “another” (“allos” vs. “heteros”)
- The Spirit is “another just like” Jesus
- So, if Jesus is God, so is the Spirit, yet he is not Jesus himself, nor is he the Father (he proceeds from the Father)
- More on the divinity of the Spirit: Acts 5, 7, 8, 10, etc.

Wrap Up

The Trinity in Himself

- Each person is God. Each person is distinct. Yet God is one.
- The persons are eternal (not created), and have always existed, even “before” time itself.
- God is therefore an eternal communion of persons—distinct, but never separate. God is not, has never been, nor will ever be alone, even though he is one being.
- God is love in his very being, because within his being the Father always loves the Son, etc.
- No person has ever been without the other two—ever. The communion is unbreakable, especially at the cross. But that is next week.
- “When I say God, I mean Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” Gregory of Nazianzus