

The Doctrine of the Trinity

Someone wise once said that virtually every theological heresy begins with a misunderstanding of the nature of God. When we begin looking at the nature of God, you may be tempted to think that this is all “ivory tower” scholarship and we shouldn’t be making a big deal about it all. If someone says they love Jesus and they trust Him, that should be enough right?

The truth is that God has revealed who He is and when we try to make Him anything other than that we are worshiping a different god...one that cannot save because he doesn’t exist.

In Job 42:7 God condemns Job’s friends for not speaking correctly about Him. It says, *“And it was so, that after the Lord had spoken these words unto Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath.”*

Before We Begin: You must understand that I believe in the doctrine of the Trinity because the Bible teaches it. Although you may find discussions, councils, and declarations throughout church history, these are not the source of the doctrine. As we study the triune God, we will be looking only at His Word.

Defining the Trinity: Don’t just skim over this – the exact language is very important. We must be very careful with our language in order to correctly express what God has revealed about Himself.

There is only one God. In the one being of God there exists three co-equal, co-eternal persons...namely the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The three persons are eternally distinct from one another.

This is who God is. Think of it this way. You are one being...a human being. Within your being there exists only one person...you. If there is more than one person in your being stop reading here and seek professional help. But in God there are three eternally distinct persons.

We are going to look at three texts from Scripture but there are many that could be examined. If you would like a full study on many scripture references which speak to the Triune nature of God, you can see the foundational outline at jasonvelotta.com.

We will examine John 1:1-4, Philippians 2:5-11, and John 17:5

Likewise we will also look at two passages that are often used as objections to the Trinity. John 14:9-10, and John 10:30.

John 1:1-4

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 The same was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men

"In the beginning was the Word" – John opens the gospel just as Genesis opens - however far back you push the beginning – the Word (which is Jesus) already was. – "was" is an imperfect tense which means it is a continuous action in the past. Jesus existed before the beginning.

"The Word was with God" – Here John presents the distinction between Father and Son.

"The Word was God" – Here John shows that although the word was with God, the Word was also divine. Jehovah's Witnesses will often claim this should be translated "the word was a god." We will talk about this mistranslation and the Greek construction in class

"The same (Jesus) was in the beginning with God" – Although Jesus was God in His nature, He was also with God in the beginning.

"All things were made by Him" – All things includes everything created. If Jesus created all things then He Himself is not created. (See Col. 1:16)

Clearly you can see that John establishes Jesus as God, yet He also differentiates Him from God. He is God and He is with God. This speaks of the distinction between Father and Son which you find throughout the gospels. Jesus often prays to the Father and the Father even speaks about the Son at Jesus' baptism. (Matt. 3:13-17)

Philippians 2:5-8

5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross

The context of this passage is Paul exhorting the Philippians to be humble like Christ was humble in giving up the glory of heaven to come to earth in the incarnation.

“being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God” – Notice that it was not robbery or improper for Jesus to be equal with God. No creature could ever claim this. It is tantamount to blasphemy and idolatry unless it is true.

But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men – How did Jesus humble Himself? He DID NOT stop being God or lay aside His divine nature. He humbled Himself BY taking the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men. It is when He became man and was born in Bethlehem.

NOW HERE IS THE POINT – Before Jesus took the form of a man and was born in Bethlehem Jesus considered it not robbery to be equal with God. This means that Jesus existed as a person before He was born in Bethlehem. Persons think and consider – which is what Jesus did before He took on human flesh. Jesus existed as God before His birth in Bethlehem.

John 17:5

5 And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was

John 17 is a prayer that Jesus prays to the Father. It is a high priestly prayer in which Jesus intercedes for His people asking the Father to care for them and unify them. Jesus is on His way to the cross and He is ready. In this verse, He tells the Father to glorify Him (by sending Him to the cross) and returning Him to the glory that He shared with the Father before the creation.

This is very instructive when we remember that God said, “I am the Lord: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another.” (Isa. 42:8).

Yet here Jesus speaks of Himself having glory with the Father before creation.

Many other verses could be addressed – please look at the foundation outline.

OBJECTIONS:

“HE WHO HAS SEEN ME HAS SEEN THE FATHER...” JOHN 14:9-10

Is Jesus saying that He IS the Father here? How could He actually be the Father if He is the Son? It may help to quote the entire passage. *“Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.”*

Jesus' words here do not make Him the Father, they show the complete unity and eternal relationship between the Father and Son. Jesus is in the Father and the Father is in Jesus.

"I AND THE FATHER ARE ONE" JOHN 10:30

This is by far the most quoted passage by those attempting to deny the doctrine of the Trinity. What so many do not understand is made perfectly clear in the actual Greek text. The word "are" in the sentence "I and the Father are one," is a first person plural, which means Jesus said, "I and the Father, *WE* are one."

Jesus is specifically speaking about a unity of purpose in the redemption of His sheep here. The context bears this out.

"And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one." John 10:28-30

I have attached a diagram below. It may be confusing at first but let me define the terms you will see and it may be more clear.

There are three biblical foundations to the doctrine of the Trinity.

Foundation 1 – Monotheism – (There is only one God)

Foundation 2 – There are three distinct persons in the one God

Foundation 3 – These three persons are co-equal as God

These three foundations are represented by the lines of the triangle

If you take away any one line – the other two lines make an arrow that points to a theological heresy.

For example – If we do away with the foundation of One God – the other two lines point to Polytheism – which means there are many gods.

This is what the Mormons believe

If we take away the line that says there are three persons in the one God, the other two lines point to Modalism – this is the teaching that God was the Father, then became the Son, and now is the Holy Spirit. This teaching says god is like an actor who comes out from behind the curtain in three different forms at different times. This is taught by people like T.D. Jakes, Paula White, Oneness Pentecostals, and bands like Philips, Craig, and Dean.

If we take away the line that says the three persons are co-equal, we have subordinationism. This teaches that Jesus is not capital G – God, but is a lesser god. The Father is truly God and Jesus is a lesser deity (like god jr.) – this is what the Jehovah's Witnesses believe.

So It is very important that we understand all three foundations from the Bible and we don't allow people to misrepresent what we actually believe. Most will claim we believe in three gods.

