



Is the Trinity Biblical?

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Introduction

There have been differences of opinion regarding the doctrine of the Trinity for millennia. In fact, great minds have debated it since the time of Christ. However, our opinion is that the greatest minds - from the Apostolic Fathers through the Reformers to modern evangelical Catholic and Protestant theologians - line up on the side of the Trinity. Throughout this short booklet we aim to bring understanding and clarity to the subject of the Trinity by looking at the biblical evidence for the Trinity, answering some common objections to it and comparing the biblical worldview with that of the beliefs of other religious sects and Islam.

A common objection by those who deny the Trinity or who choose to sweep it under a theological rug so to speak, is that people who may not have a good understanding of the Bible are being taught that they have to believe in a Trinity that they cannot comprehend. Put another way, because the Trinity appears to be difficult to grasp, some feel it's either not worth understanding or that it must not be a biblical doctrine. We'll look at this in more detail in the pages to come, but let us say that it would bother us more if people could comprehend our Triune God because a god we can "comprehend" is not worthy of our worship and is in fact no god at all. God's thoughts are not our thoughts, nor are His ways our ways. When we examine the doctrine of the Trinity we have to keep that in mind.

Now, without further ado, let's start discovering if in fact the Trinity is biblical or not.

The Trinity: A Brief Overview

Before we jump into more details about the Trinity and why it is a biblical doctrine, we need to come up with a working definition of the Trinity, and before we do that a couple qualifiers need to be given.

First, the doctrine of the Trinity is not biblical in the sense that justification (Rom. 4, Gal. 2) or the doctrine of Christ (Col. 1, Phil. 2) are biblical. Also, it is not supported by specific "Trinitarian" passages. Rather, the doctrine of the Trinity is the result of considering how Scripture speaks of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Thus, the doctrine is forced on us to account for the unity-diversity of the three persons. With these qualifiers in mind we can work out a basic definition of the Trinity. In this definition of the Trinity there are three points:

1. There is but one God
2. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is each a distinct person
3. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is each God

Perhaps the term Tri-unity would better account for both unity and diversity, but we are historically stuck with Trinity as a fixed term. In this Tri-unity (or Trinity) both the oneness and the three-ness are equally ultimate, yet there is a priority of oneness over three-ness in terms of the order of revelation, but not in terms of ontology, that is, in nature of being.

This equal ultimacy removes any basis for "subordination" in regards to essence or being, but not in regards to persons. The Son and Holy Spirit, as God, are not generated, nor do they proceed in any fashion from the Father; in terms of substance they are equally ultimate as the Father. However, as persons they are indeed subordinate to the Father. The Father sends the Son, and the Father and the Son send the Holy Spirit.

While the Bible does not provide a well-rounded doctrine of the Trinity there are many allusions to it in Scripture. For instance...

Elohim is a plural name for God, the Shema (Deut. 6:4) says the Lord is one but the word in Hebrew that is translated as one is echad (which means one in plurality) and it is the same word used in Genesis 2:24 where God says man shall cleave unto his wife and they shall be one echad (again one in plurality).

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD. (Deuteronomy 6:4)

Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. (Genesis 2:24)

In creation, God speaks of Himself in plurality (Elohim) and when He says "Let us."

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. (Genesis 1:26)

In salvation, it was the "counsel" of God that planned the cross. This means that all three persons of the Trinity agreed on the method for salvation through Jesus Christ.

Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain. (Acts 2:23)

Jesus was prophesized to come unto God the Father out of Bethlehem. The plan of God the Father was in full concert with His Son.

But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. (Micah 5:2)

We have the Threefold benediction in Num. 6:24-26 and in 2 Cor. 13:14

The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. (Numbers 6:24-26)

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen. (2 Corinthians 13:14)

The eternal love of the Godhead

Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. (John 17:24)

The Trisagion (Holy, Holy, Holy)

And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. Then flew one of

the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar. (Isaiah 6:3-6)

God addresses Himself

Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. (Psalm 45:6-7)

But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. (Hebrews 1:8-9)

The outline of the Trinity

I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his lovingkindnesses. For he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie: so he was their Saviour. In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old. But they rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them. Then he remembered the days of old, Moses, and his people, saying, Where is he that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of his flock? where is he that put his holy Spirit within him? That led them by the right hand of Moses with his glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make himself an everlasting name? That led them through the deep, as an horse in the wilderness, that they should not stumble? As a beast goeth down into the valley, the Spirit of the Lord caused him to rest: so didst thou lead thy people, to make thyself a glorious name. (Isaiah 63:7-14)

In the Great Commission the command is to baptize in one name followed by an elliptical clause indicating that one name is the name of each person of the Trinity

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. (Matthew 28:19)

Now that we have been equipped with a working definition of the Trinity and have looked at some of the higher-level aspects that the Bible has to say about it we will continue onward with a deeper look at what the debate over the Trinity entails, including what religious sects and Islam believe about it.

How Religious Sects and Islam View the Trinity

While some might protest that division over the Trinity is a matter of “splitting hairs” or that it does not matter that much in the grand scheme of things, we believe that the Trinity is a central core doctrine of Christianity taught throughout scripture. In fact, the Trinity is so crucial to what it means to be a Christian that one cannot define the word “Christian” without it.

We hold that a Christian (among other things) is one who believes in the full deity *and* humanity of Jesus Christ, who is one God with the Father and the Holy Spirit. We’re not alone in that view. The majority of mainline denominations throughout Christian history have ascribed to that. In Christian circles those who have not are termed religious sects. These employ less restrictive definitions to the word Christian and they adhere to a host of teachings that are outside of the essential doctrines of historic Christianity, including the biblical definition of

the Trinity. These also adhere to other extra-biblical revelations that are outside of God's complete, final and literal Word, the Bible.

For example, throughout the New Testament God was zealous to announce that Jesus was His Son. (Matt. 3:17, Mark 9:7) Yet, this title has resulted in much controversy throughout church history, particularly in the 4th Century when **Arius** denied the Trinity and argued that Jesus was only a created being; that Jesus had a beginning in time and thus was a creature. Therefore, since Jesus was begotten He was not eternal, and if not eternal then only a creature and not God.

The teachings of Arius on the Trinity are considered heretical, however this and similar other controversies regarding the Trinity still exists today between mainline Christianity and Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses and a number of other smaller religious sects. Such groups are in fact distinguished from mainstream denominations in that they do not accept the historic creeds and confessions of the Christian church. And although most of the major sects hold to moral standards that are taught as the Christian ideal, they differ from historic Christianity in their attitude regarding many things, and especially the regarding the Trinity.

This is not to say that such groups do not hold an otherwise lofty view of Jesus (even over angels and the creatures), but they do deny His "full" deity. The problem, some will say, is that John 1:1 does not have the definite article and only says "the Word was God." Some then claim that since it does not say "the Word was the God," it does not affirm that the Word was God and that the statement really means "the Word was a God."

However, if that is what John was communicating there are at least two problems. First, almost all reputable New Testament Greek scholars disagree with that reading of the Greek. Second, such a reading raises a greater problem than it solves because it leaves John affirming polytheism and not monotheism. The absence or presence of the definite article has no theological significance on this text.

In John 1:1 we also read that the Word was with God and the Word was God. Thus, the Word is both distinguished from and yet identified with God. That is Jesus is the same as God the Father yet distinguished from the Father. So the Father and the Son are one in being but distinguished by personality and their work and ministry.

Nevertheless, many religious sects deny the Trinity in different ways. For example, **Christadelphians** believe that the Son of God come into existence when the Virgin Mary gave birth to Jesus who previously existed as a potential in the will of God. After Jesus was resurrected His humanity was transformed into a divine being. Their teachings originated with John Thomas who lived from 1805 to 1871.

Christian Science holds that the Trinity is composed of God the Father-Mother, Christ the spiritual idea of sonship and the divine science or the Holy Comforter. They believe that spirit and matter are complete opposites and cannot co-exist; hence matter, illness, and sin are errors of the mortal mind. They believe that Jesus, more than anyone else, presents to us Christ, the true "idea" of God. At His ascension the human, material idea (or Jesus) disappeared, while the spiritual self (or Christ) continues to exist. Their teachings are based on "Science and Truth with Key to the Scriptures" which was written by their founder Mary Baker Eddy who lived from 1821 to 1910. Her book is held to be supremely authoritative and is read alongside the Bible.

Jehovah Witnesses teach that the Bible does not teach the full deity of Jesus Christ and by so doing adopt the Arian heresy that Christ was the first created being, hence not God. Their headquarters prescribes the interpretations of Scripture and these interpretations stem from the teachings of Charles Taze Russell who lived from 1852 to 1916.

Mormons or **The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints** teach that God has a physical body and that all humans, including Jesus Christ were begotten by God "in the beginning" before being born on earth. They also teach that just as Jesus "became" God, we too may become gods. Their teachings originated with Joseph Smith who lived from 1804 to 1844 and who claimed to have translated the "Book of Mormon" from golden plates

written in ancient Egyptian that were found in upstate New York. He also wrote two other books that he claimed were inspired, “Doctrines and Covenants” and “Pearl of Great Price.”

Scientology teaches that Jesus is only one of several great teachers seeking the truth that Scientology reveals.

Swedenborg Society and the New Jerusalem Church was founded by the followers of a scientist, philosopher and psychic, Emanuel Swedenborg who lived from 1688 to 1772. Swedenborg claimed to have revelations of spiritual truth that came from God. He held that there is one God with three essentials that correspond to the soul, body and action in mankind. At the incarnation the one divine being took up the human into himself and at the cross his human became divine. They deny vicarious atonement and justification by faith and teach that salvation comes through a life lived in love. They interpret the Scriptures by their correspondence with inner spiritual truth and reject the biblical books of 1 & 2 Chronicles, Song of Solomon, Acts and all of the epistles because they lack what they regard as the “internal sense.”

The Unification Church or the Moonies interpret the Bible through the teachings Sun Myung Moon who was born in 1920. Moon founded the church on May 1, 1954 based on a series of vision that he had. Moonies hold that Jesus is a man in whom God is incarnate but is not God himself. Although Jesus achieved spiritual salvation for mankind, because Jesus did not marry and have a family, he did not achieve the physical salvation in which there would be more and more perfect families throughout the world. Therefore, one of the visions Moon had was that he was to complete the unfinished work of Jesus Christ.

It is clear that none of these sects accept the historic creeds and confessions of the Christian church, nor are their attitudes regarding the Trinity (and other things) biblical. In all such cases they present the Trinity in a warped fashion that strays from the biblical view.

We’ll look more at the biblical view later, but before we do it is important to understand what those who are fully outside the realm of Christianity also believe about the Trinity, namely those who follow **Islam**.

It is true that the Qur’an affirms that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah and a true prophet of God, that he was virgin born and performed many miracles. Therefore, Muslims believe, because the Qur’an teaches these very true and proper things about Jesus, that Christians should be laudatory of them and look upon them as supportive of Christian beliefs.

However, a careful reading of the Qur’an will disclose that Muhammad did not have a clear grasp of what classic orthodox Christianity was teaching about the Trinity in the seventh century A.D. He was hearing views that had been totally rejected by the early fathers of the church. Muhammad’s consistent representation of the Trinity suggests that he conceived the idea of a trinity along the lines of crude tri-theism, a heresy that Christianity had consistently repudiated. In Sura 5, “The Table,” verse 116, he teaches that Christians believe that God’s “three-ness” is composed of Allah, Jesus (whom he believed ill-informed Christians had wrongly deified), and Jesus’ mother Mary.

Now whatever sub-scriptural oddities some church fathers may have espoused over the early centuries of the church about God as Trinity, we can declare categorically that not one of them ever taught that God’s “three-ness” included the mother of Jesus, nor has any ecumenical council ever endorsed such a notion. There was a fourth century heretical sect made up of fanatical women called Collyridians existing in Arabia that had rendered divine worship to Mary and perhaps it was the existence of this sect that gave Muhammad the false impression that Christians thought Mary was a member of the divine Triad.

In any case, this is an error of massive proportions on Muhammad’s part and shows ignorance of Christian teaching. It also shows that the Qur’an contains a significant error respecting this major doctrine in the belief system of one of its major religious contenders. Christianity has historically declared in its creeds and confessions that within the unity of the one living and true God eternally exist three persons: God the Father, God the Son,

and God the Holy Spirit; that these three are one God, the same in substance and equal in power and glory. Not to mention that Islam outright denies the Trinity. Theirs is a monotheistic religion that on closer inspection falls apart without the Trinity.

Consequently, the Trinity is the reason behind many of the central tenants of Christianity. For example, our God is unique and true not only because he is relational but more importantly because he is our Father. He is our Father because that is his role within the Trinity. Without the Trinity, God would not be our Father.

Moreover, if God was only one person and not three sharing the same divine essence then he would not want us, would not have created us, and would only be a God we would have to obey out of fear (as in Islam) as well as out of obligation. A singular God is a tyrant God, who cannot be a Father, but this actually changes in the loving relationship of the trinity where God is Father.

So, religious sects and Islam, Christianity's major contender, all confuse, deny and present false views of the biblical Trinity. Now that we have been equipped with a working definition of the Trinity and looked at what the debate over the Trinity entails, including what religious and Islam believe about it, we will move our discussion along by looking at why the Trinity is in fact biblical.

Is the Trinity Biblical?

As we have seen, the Trinity is a basic doctrine of orthodox Christianity. Yet the word "Trinity" is not found anywhere in the Bible. The doctrine of the Trinity says that there is one God who exists eternally as three distinct persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The elements of this doctrine are all taken directly from the Bible. The first plank of the Trinitarian platform is that there is only one God. The Bible could not be more explicit on this point, which it states explicitly about two dozen times. In Isaiah 44:8 God says that even He does not know of any other gods!

Moreover, Jesus often spoke of God as His Father, and the apostles frequently spoke of "God the Father." But the New Testament also insists that Jesus is God. For example, Thomas acknowledged Jesus as, "My Lord and my God" and both Peter and Paul spoke of Jesus as "our God and Savior." (Jn. 20:28, 2 Pet. 1:1, Tit. 2:13) Yet the New Testament also makes the distinction between the Father and the Son as two very different persons. In fact, they tell us that they love one another, speak to each other, and seek to glorify each other. (Jn. 17:1-26)

The Old Testament refers often to the Holy Spirit as God at work in the world, without distinction from the Father. But Jesus in John 14 to 16 explained that this Holy Spirit would be sent by the Father at Christ's request. The Holy Spirit would teach and guide the disciples, not speaking on His own initiative, but speaking on Christ's behalf and glorifying Christ. Thus, the Holy Spirit is revealed by Christ to be a third person distinct from the Father and distinct from the Son.

In short, the doctrine of the Trinity is completely and totally biblical, and it is essential that all Christians give assent to this doctrine. However, to properly defend the Trinity one must be equipped with a thorough knowledge of it. To follow are various biblical references and notes for further study on the doctrine of the Trinity. These are meant to aid the believer in cultivating a comprehensive understanding and apologetic regarding the Trinity.

I. THERE IS ONE GOD

A. One God: explicit statements

1. OT: Deut. 4:35, 39; 32:39; 2 Sam. 22:32; Isa. 37:20; 43:10; 44:6-8; 45:5, 14, 21-22; 46:9
2. NT: John 5:44; Rom. 3:30; 16:27; 1 Cor. 8:4-6; Gal. 3:20; Eph. 4:6; 1 Tim. 1:17; 2:5; James 2:19; Jude 25

B. There is none like God (in His essence)

1. Explicit statements: Ex. 8:10; 9:14; 15:11; 2 Sam. 7:22; 1 Chr. 17:20; Psa 86:8; 1 Kings 8:23; Isa. 40:18, 25; 44:7; 46:5, 9; Jer. 10:6-7; Micah 7:18
 2. Being like God a Satanic lie: Gen. 3:5; Isa. 14:14; John 8:44
 3. Fallen man became "like God" only in that he took upon himself to know good and evil, not that he acquired godhood: Gen. 3:22
- C. There is only one *true* God: 2 Chr. 15:3; Jer. 10:10; John 17:3; 1 Thess. 1:9; 1 John 5:20-21
- D. All other "gods" are therefore false gods (idols), not gods at all: Deut. 32:21; 1 Sam. 12:21; Psa. 96:5; Isa. 37:19; 41:23-24, 29; Jer. 2:11; 5:7; 16:20; 1 Cor. 8:4; 10:19-20
- E. Demons, not gods, are the powers behind false worship: Deut. 32:17; Psa. 106:37; 1 Cor. 10:20; Gal. 4:8
- F. How men are meant to be "like God"
1. The image of God indicates that man is to represent God and share His moral character, not that man can be metaphysically like God: Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1; 1 Cor. 11:7; Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10
 2. The goal of being like Christ has the following aspects only:
 - a. Sharing His moral character: 1 John 3:2; Rom. 8:29
 - b. Being raised with glorified, immortal bodies like His: Phil. 3:21; 1 Cor. 15:49
 3. Becoming partakers of the divine nature refers again to moral nature ("having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust"), not metaphysical nature: 2 Pet. 1:4; see also Heb. 12:10; on the meaning of "partakers," see 1 Cor. 10:18, 20; 2 Cor. 1:17; 1 Pet. 5:1
- G. Are mighty or exalted men gods?
1. No Scripture says explicitly that men *are* gods
 2. Powerful, mighty men are explicitly said not to be gods: Ezek. 28:2, 9; Isa. 31:3; 2 Thess. 2:4
 3. Men and God are opposite, exclusive categories: Num. 23:19; Isa. 31:3; Ezek. 28:2, 9; Hosea 11:9; Matt. 19:26; John 10:33; Acts 12:22; 1 Cor. 14:2
 4. Moses was "as God," not really a god: Ex. 4:16; 7:1
 5. Ezek. 32:21 speaks of warriors or soldiers as "mighty gods," but in context they are so regarded by their pagan nations, not by God or Israel; cf. Ezek. 28:2, 9
 6. The *elohim* before whom accused stood in Exodus was God Himself, not judges, as many translations incorrectly render: Ex. 22:8-9, 28; compare Deut. 19:17
 7. The use of *elohim* in Psalm 82, probably in reference to wicked judges, as cited by Jesus in John 10:34-36, does not mean that men really can be gods.
 - a. It is Asaph, not the Lord, who calls the judges *elohim* in Psa. 82:1, 6. This is important, even though we agree that Psa. 82 is inspired.
 - b. Asaph's meaning is not, "Although you are gods, you will die like men" (which is how Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, etc., read it), but rather, "I called you gods, but in fact you will all die like the men that you really are."
 - c. The Psalmist was no more saying that wicked judges were truly gods than he was saying that they were truly "sons of the Most High" (v. 6b).
 - d. Thus, Psa. 82:1 calls the judges *elohim* in irony. They had quite likely taken their role in judgment (cf. point 5. above) to mean they were *elohim*, or gods, and Asaph's message is that these so-called gods were mere men who would die under the judgment of the true *elohim* (vss. 1-2, 7-8).
 - e. Christ's use of this passage in John 10:34-36 does not negate the above interpretation of Psalm 82.
 - f. The words, "the Scripture cannot be broken," means "the Scripture cannot go without having some ultimate fulfillment" (cf. John 7:23; Matt. 5:17). Thus Jesus is saying that what the OT judges were called in irony, He is in reality; He does what they could not do, and is what they

could never be (see the Adam-Christ contrasts in Rom. 5:12-21 and 1 Cor. 15:21-22, 45 for a similar use of OT Scripture).

- g. The clause, "those against whom the word of God came" (John 10:35) shows that this "word" was a word of judgment against the so-called gods; which shows that they were false gods, not really gods at all.
 - h. Finally, these wicked men were certainly not "godlike" or "divine" by nature, so that in any case the use of *elohim* to refer to them must be seen as figurative, not literal.
8. Even if men were gods (which they are not), this would be irrelevant to Jesus, since He was God (or "a god," as the Jehovah's Witnesses translate) as a preexistent spirit before creation: John 1:1

H. Are angels gods?

- 1. No Scripture explicitly states that angels are gods
 - 2. Demonic spirits are not gods, 1 Cor. 10:20; Gal. 4:8; thus, being "mighty spirits" does not make angels gods
 - 3. Satan is therefore also a false god: 2 Cor. 4:4
 - 4. Psalm 8:5 does not teach that angels are gods.
 - a. Psa. 8:5 is paraphrased in Heb. 2:7, not quoted literally (cf. Psa. 68:18 with Eph. 4:8). In Psa. 8:5, *elohim* certainly means God, not angels, since Psa. 8:3-8 parallels Gen. 1:1, 8, 16, 26-28. Note that the Psalmist is speaking the man's exalted place in creation, whereas Hebrews is speaking of the lower place taken by Christ in becoming a man. Thus, Heb. 2:7 may not mean to equate angels with gods at all.
 - b. Even if Heb. 2:7 does imply that angels are "gods," in the context of Hebrews 1-2 these angels would be those falsely exalted above Christ: Note Heb. 1:6 (which quotes Psa. 97:7, which definitely speaks of "gods" in the sense of false gods); and cf. Col. 2:16 on the problem of the worship of angels.
 - 5. Elsewhere in the Psalms angels, if spoken of as gods, are considered false gods: Psa. 29:1; 86:8-10; 89:6; 95:3; 96:4-5; 97:7-9; 135:5; 136:2; 138:1; cf. Ex. 15:11; 18:11; Deut. 10:17; 1 Chr. 16:25; 2 Chr. 2:5
 - 6. Even if angels were gods (which the above shows they are not), that would be irrelevant to Jesus, since He is not an angelic being, but the Son who is worshiped by the angels as their Creator, Lord, and God: Heb. 1:1-13
- I. Conclusion: If there is only one God, one true God, all other gods being false gods, neither men nor angels being gods, and none even like God by nature -- all of which the Bible says repeatedly and explicitly -- then we must conclude that there is indeed only one God.

II. THIS ONE GOD IS KNOWN IN THE OT AS JEHOVAH/YAHWEH ("THE LORD")

- A. Texts where Jehovah is said to be *elohim* or *el*: Deut. 4:35, 39; Psa. 100:3; etc.
- B. Texts where the compound "Jehovah God" (*Yahweh Elohim*) is used: Gen. 2-3; 9:26; 24; Ex. 3:15-18; 4:5; 2 Sam. 7:22, 25; etc.
- C. Conclusion: Jehovah is the only God, the only *el/Elohim*

III. GOD IS A UNIQUE, INCOMPREHENSIBLE BEING

- A. There is only one God, thus unique: see I.A.
- B. There is none even like God: see I.B ABOVE.
- C. God cannot be fully comprehended: 1 Cor. 8:2-3
- D. God can only be known insofar as the Son reveals Him: Matt. 11:25-27; John 1:18
- E. Analogical language needed to describe God: Ezek. 1:26-28 Rev. 1:13-16

- F. God is transcendent, entirely distinct from and different than the universe, as the carpenter is distinct from the bench
 - 1. God is separate from the world: Isa. 40:22; Acts 17:24
 - 2. God is contrasted with the world: Psa. 102:25-27; 1 John 2:15-17
 - 3. God created the world: Gen. 1:1; Psa. 33:6; 102:25; Isa. 42:5; 44:24; John 1:3; Rom. 11:36; Heb. 1:2; 11:3

IV. THE FATHER OF JESUS CHRIST IS GOD

- A. Explicit statements: John 17:3; 1 Cor. 8:6; etc.
- B. The expression, "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ": 2 Cor. 1:3; Eph. 1:3; 1 Pet. 1:3

V. JESUS CHRIST IS GOD

- A. Explicit statements:
 - 1. Isa. 9:6; note 10:21. Trans. which render "mighty hero," etc., are inconsistent in their rendering of 10:21. Also note that Ezek. 32:21 is (a) not in the same context, as is Isa. 10:21, and (b) speaking of false gods, cf. I.G.5. above.
 - 2. John 1:1. Even if Jesus here is called "a god" (NWT), since there is only one God, Jesus is that God. However, the NWT rendering is a mistranslation. Other passages using the Greek word for God (*theos*) in the same construction are always rendered "God": Mark 12:27; Luke 20:38; John 8:54; Phil. 2:13; Heb. 11:16. Passages in which a shift occurs from *ho theos* ("the God") to *theos* ("God") never imply a shift in meaning: Mark 12:27; Luke 20:37-38; John 3:2; 13:3; Rom. 1:21; 1 Thess. 1:9; Heb. 9:14; 1 Pet. 4:10-11.
 - 3. John 1:18. The best manuscripts have "the unique God" (*monogenes*, frequently rendered "only-begotten," actually means "one of a kind," "unique," though in the NT always in context of a son or daughter). Even if one translates "only-begotten," the idea is not of a "begotten god" as opposed to an "unbegotten god."
 - 4. John 20:28. Compare Rev. 4:11, where the same construction is used in the plural ("our") instead of the singular ("my"). See also Psa. 35:23. Note that Christ's response indicates that Thomas's acclamation was not wrong. Also note that John 20:17 does show that the Father was Jesus' "God" (due to Jesus becoming a man), but the words "my God" as spoken by Thomas later in the same chapter must mean no less than in v. 17. Thus, what the Father is to Jesus in His humanity, Jesus is to Thomas (and therefore to us as well).
 - 5. Acts 20:28: "the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." The variant readings (e.g., "the church of the Lord") show that the original was understood to mean "His own blood," not "the blood of His own [Son]" (since otherwise no one would have thought to change it). Thus, all other renderings are attempts to evade the startling clarity and meaning of this passage.
 - 6. Rom. 9:5. While grammatically this is not the only possible interpretation, the consistent form of doxologies in Scripture, as well as the smoothest reading of the text, supports the identification of Christ as "God" in this verse.
 - 7. Titus 2:13. Grammatically and contextually, this is one of the strongest proof-texts for the deity of Christ. Sharp's first rule, properly understood, proves that the text should be translated "our great God and Savior" (cf. same construction in Luke 20:37; Rev. 1:6; and many other passages). Note also that Paul always uses the word "manifestation" ("appearing") of Christ: 2 Thess. 2:8; 1 Tim. 6:14; 2 Tim. 1:10; 4:1, 8.
 - 8. Heb. 1:8. The rendering, "God is your throne," is nonsense -- God is not a throne, He is the one who sits on the throne! Also "God is your throne," if taken to mean God is the source of one's rule, could be said about any angelic ruler -- but Hebrews 1 is arguing that Jesus is superior to the angels.

9. 2 Pet. 1:1. The same construction is used here as in Titus 2:13; see the parallel passage in 2 Pet. 1:11; 2:20; 3:2, 18.
 10. 1 John 5:20. Note that the most obvious antecedent for "this" is Jesus Christ. Also note that the "eternal life" is Christ, as can be seen from 1:2.
- B. Jesus is Jehovah/Yahweh:
1. Rom. 10:9-13. Note the repeated "for," which links these verses closely together. The "Lord" of 10:13 must be the "Lord" of 10:9, 12.
 2. Phil. 2:9-11. In context, the "name that is above every name" is "Lord" (vs. 11), i.e., Jehovah.
 3. Heb. 1:10. Here God the Father addresses the Son as "Lord," in a quotation of Psa. 102:25 (cf. 102:24, where the person addressed is called "God"). Since here the Father addresses the Son as "Lord," this cannot be explained away as a text in which a creature addresses Christ as God/Lord in a merely representational sense.
 4. 1 Pet. 2:3. This verse is nearly an exact quotation of Psa. 34:8a, where "Lord" is Jehovah. From 1 Pet. 2:4-8 it is also clear that "the Lord" in v. 3 is Jesus.
 5. 1 Pet. 3:14-15. These verses are a clear reference to Isa. 8:12-13, where the one who is to be regarded as holy is Jehovah.
- C. Jesus has the titles of God
1. Titles belonging only to God
 - a. The first and the last: Rev. 1:17; 22:13; cf. Isa. 44:6
 - b. King of kings and Lord of lords: 1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 17:14; 19:16
 2. Titles belonging in the ultimate sense only to God
 - a. Savior: Luke 2:11; John 4:42; 1 John 4:14; Tit. 2:13, cf. v. 10; etc.; cf. Isa. 43:11; 45:21-22; 1 Tim. 4:10; on Jesus becoming the source of salvation, Heb. 5:9, cf. Ex. 15:2; Psa. 118:14, 21
 - b. Shepherd: John 10:11; Heb. 13:20; cf. Psa. 23:1; Isa. 40:11
 - c. Rock: 1 Cor. 10:4; cf. Isa. 44:8
- D. Jesus receives the honors due to God alone
1. Honor: John 5:23
 2. Love: Matt. 10:37
 3. Prayer: John 14:14 (text debated, but in any case it is Jesus who answers the prayer); Acts 7:59-60 (cf. Luke 23:34, 46); Rom. 10:12-13; 1 Cor. 1:2; etc.
 4. Worship (*proskuneo*): Matt. 28:17; Heb. 1:6 (cf. Psa. 97:7); cf. Matt. 4:10
 5. Religious or sacred service (*latreuo*): Rev. 22:3
 6. Faith: John 3:16; 14:1; etc.
- E. Jesus does the works of God
1. Creation: John 1:3; 1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16-17; Heb. 1:2; Rev. 3:14 (cf. 21:6 on "beginning"); on "through" and "in" cf. Rom. 11:36; Heb. 2:10; Acts 17:28; cf. also Isa. 44:24
 2. Sustaining the universe: Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3
 3. Salvation: See C.2.a. above.
 4. All of them: John 5:17-29
- F. Jesus has all of the incommunicable attributes of God
1. All of them: John 1:1; Col. 1:15; 2:9; Heb. 1:3
 2. Is self-existent: John 5:26
 3. Is unchangeable: Heb. 1:10-12; 13:8

4. Is eternal: John 1:1; 8:58; 17:5; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:2
5. Is omnipresent: Matt. 18:20; 28:20; John 3:13; Eph. 1:23; 4:10; Col. 3:11
6. Is omniscient: John 16:30
7. Is incomprehensible: Matt. 11:25-27

G. Jesus is the *Son* of God

1. "Son" in Scripture can mean simply one possessing the nature of something, whether literal or figurative (e.g., "Son of man," "sons of thunder," "sons of disobedience," cf. Mark 3:17; Eph. 2:1)
2. Whenever "son of" is used in relation to a person (son of man, son of Abraham, son of David, etc.), the son possesses the nature of his father
3. Jesus is clearly not the Son of God in a *literal* sense, i.e., He was not physically procreated by God
4. On the other hand, Jesus is clearly the Son of God in a unique sense (cf. "only-begotten Son," John 1:14; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9) and in a preeminent sense (i.e., the term is more fitting for Him than for anyone else)
5. Scripture is explicit that the Son possesses God's essence or nature (cf. F. above)
6. Jesus' repeated claim to be the Son of God was consistently understood by the Jewish leaders as a blasphemous claim to equality with God, an understanding Jesus never denied: John 5:17-23; 8:58-59; 10:30-39; 19:7; Matt. 26:63-65
7. Jesus is therefore God's *Son*, not God's creation, God's servant, God's agent, etc. Jesus is God's Son who *became* a servant for our sake and for the Father's glory (John 13:13-15; 17:4; Phil. 2:6-11; Heb. 1:4-13; 3:1-6; 5:8; etc.)

H. Objections

1. Prov. 8:22: This text is not a literal description of Christ, but a poetic personification of wisdom (cf. all of Prov. 1-9, esp. 8:12-21; 9:1-6), poetically saying that God "got" His wisdom before He did anything -- i.e., that God has always had wisdom.
2. Col. 1:15: Does not mean that Christ is the first creature, since He is here presented as the Son and principal heir of the Father (cf. vv. 12-14); thus "firstborn" here means "heir" (cf. Gen. 43:33; 48:14-20; Ex. 4:22; 1 Chron. 5:1-3; Psa. 89:27; Jer. 31:9); note that v. 16 speaks of the Son as Creator, not creature (cf. E.I. above)
3. Rev. 3:14: "Beginning" (*arche*) in Rev. as a title means source or one who begins, i.e., Creator (cf. Rev. 1:8; 21:6; 22:13); elsewhere Christ is called the *arche* in the sense of "ruler," Col. 1:18, cf. plural *archai* "rulers" in Col. 1:16; 2:10, 15, also Luke 12:11; Rom. 8:38; Eph. 3:10; 6:12; Tit. 3:1; cf. Luke 20:20; Jude 6; 1 Cor. 15:24; Eph. 1:21
4. 1 Cor. 11:3; 15:28. Jesus is still subordinate to God, but as the Son to the Father; i.e., they are equal in nature, but the Son is subordinate relationally to the Father
5. John 20:17; Rom. 15:6; 1 Cor. 15:24; 2 Cor. 1:3; Rev. 1:6; 3:12: Jesus calls the Father "My God" because He is still man as well as God; note the distinction between "My God" and "your God" in John 20:17 (i.e., Jesus never speaks of "our God" including Himself with the disciples)
6. Mark 13:32: Jesus' statement that He did not know the time of His return is to be explained by His voluntary acceptance of the humble form and likeness of a man (Phil. 2:7); in fact as God Jesus did know all things (John 16:30), and after His resurrection He does not include Himself as not knowing (Acts 1:6-7)
7. Mark 10:17-18: Jesus does not deny being God, but simply tells the man that he has no business calling anyone "good" in an unqualified sense except God
8. Heb. 5:14: Jesus was tempted, cf. James 1:13; but note that Jesus could not sin, John 5:19
9. John 1:18: No one has seen God, but men have seen Jesus, e.g., 1 John 1:1-2; but note that no man can see the glorified Jesus either, 1 Tim. 6:16, and that to see Jesus is to see the Father, John 14:9

10. 1 Tim. 1:17: God cannot die, but Jesus did, e.g., Phil. 2:8; but note that no one could take Jesus' life from Him, He could not remain dead, and He raised Himself: John 10:18; Acts 2:24; John 2:19-22
11. 1 Cor. 8:6: Father called God, Jesus called Lord: but here "God" and "Lord" are synonymous (cf. v. 5); moreover, this text no more denies that Jesus is God than it does that the Father is Lord (Matt. 11:25); cf. Jude 4, where Jesus is the only Lord
12. 1 Tim. 2:5: Jesus here supposedly distinct from God; but Jesus is also distinct from (fallen) men, yet is Himself a man; likewise Jesus is distinct from God (the Father), but is also God
13. Deut. 4:12, 15-25: God did not appear in a human form to Israel, lest they fall into idolatry; but this does not rule out His appearing in human form later after they had learned to abhor idolatry

VI. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GOD

- A. The Holy Spirit is equated with God: Acts 5:3-4; 2 Cor. 3:17-18
- B. Has the incommunicable attributes of God
 1. Eternal: Heb. 9:14
 2. Omnipresent: Psa. 139:7
 3. Omniscient: 1 Cor. 2:10-11
- C. Is involved in all of the works of God
 1. Creation: Gen. 1:2; Psa. 104:30
 2. Incarnation: Matt. 1:18, 20; Luke 1:35
 3. Resurrection: Rom. 1:4; 8:11
 4. Salvation: Rom. 8:1-27
- D. Is a person
 1. Has a name: Matt. 28:19; note that even though "name" *might* be used of a nonperson, here, in conjunction with the Father and the Son, it must be used of a person
 2. Is the "Helper"
 - a. Is *another Helper*: John 14:16, cf. 1 John 2:1; note also that "Helper" (*parakletos*) was used in Greek always or almost always of persons
 - b. Is sent in Jesus' name, to teach: John 14:26
 - c. Will arrive, and then bear witness: John 15:26-27
 - d. Is sent by Christ to convict of sin, will speak not on his own but on behalf of Christ
 - e. Will glorify Christ, thus exhibiting humility: John 16:7-14
 3. Is the *Holy Spirit*, in contrast to unholy spirits: Mark 3:22-30, cf. Matt. 12:32; 1 Tim. 4:1; 1 John 3:24-4:6
 4. "Impersonal" language used of the Spirit paralleled by language used of other persons
 - a. The Holy Spirit as fire: Matt. 3:11; Luke 3:16; cf. Ex. 3:2-4; Deut. 4:24; 9:3; Heb. 12:29
 - b. The Holy Spirit poured out: Acts 2:17, 33; cf. Isa. 53:12; Phil. 2:17; 2 Tim. 4:6
 - c. Being filled with the Holy Spirit: Eph. 5:18, etc.; cf. Eph. 3:17, 19; 4:10

VII. THE FATHER, SON, AND HOLY SPIRIT ARE DISTINCT PERSONS

- A. Matt. 28:19
 1. "The Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit": use of definite article before each personal noun indicates distinct persons unless explicitly stated otherwise; compare Rev. 1:17; 2:8, 26.

2. Jehovah's Witnesses, Armstrongites, etc., argue that "Father" and "Son" are distinct persons but Holy Spirit is not a person at all; Oneness Pentecostals argue that all three are different offices or roles of one person. Both views are impossible in view of the grammar.
 3. Does singular "name" prove that the three are one person? No; compare Gen. 5:2; 11:4; 48:6; and especially 48:16!
 4. "Name" need not be personal name, may be title: Isa. 9:6; Matt. 1:23. If a single personal name is sought, the name shared by all three persons is "Yahweh" or "Jehovah."
- B. Acts 2:38 and Matt. 28:19
1. Neither passage specifies that certain words are to be spoken during baptism; nor does the Bible ever record someone saying, "I baptize you in the name of..."
 2. Those said to be baptized in the name of Jesus (whether or not the formula "in the name of Jesus" was used) were people already familiar with the God of the OT:
 - a. Jews: Acts 2:5, 38; 22:16
 - b. Samaritans: Acts 8:5, 12, 16
 - c. God-fearing Gentiles: Acts 10:1-2, 22, 48
 - d. Disciples of John the Baptist: Acts 19:1-5
 - e. The first Christians in Corinth were Jews and God-fearing Gentiles: Acts 18:1-8; 1 Cor. 1:13
 3. Trinitarian formula for baptism (if that is what Matt. 28:19 is) was given in context of commissioning apostles to take the gospel to "all the nations," including people who did not know of the biblical God.
- C. Father and Son are two persons
1. The salutations: Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:3; Eph. 1:2; 6:23; Phil. 1:2; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1, 2; 1 Tim. 1:1, 2; 2 Tim. 1:2; Tit. 1:4; Phm. 3; James 1:1; 2 Peter 1:2; 2 John 3.
 2. Two witnesses; John 5:31-32; 8:16-18; compare Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6; 19:15.
 3. The Father sent the Son: John 3:17; Gal. 4:4; 1 John 4:10; etc.; compare John 1:6; 17:18; 20:21.
 4. The Father and the Son love each other: John 3:35; 14:31; 17:23-26.
 5. The Father speaks to the Son, and the Son speaks to the Father: John 11:41-42; 12:28; 17:1-26; etc.
- D. Jesus is not God the Father
1. Isa. 9:6. "Father of eternity" means eternal; compare other names formed with word "father":
 - a. *Abialbon*, "father of strength" = strong (2 Sam. 23:31)
 - b. *Abiasaph*, "father of gathering" = gatherer (Ex. 6:24)
 2. John 10:30
 - a. Jesus did not say, "I am the Father," nor did He say, "the Son and the Father are one person."
 - b. The first person plural *esmen* ("are") implies "we," thus two persons.
 - c. The neuter word for "one" (*hen*) is used, implying essential unity but not personal unity (compare John 17:21-23).
 3. John 5:43
 - a. Oneness interpretation: Jesus' coming in His Father's name means He was the Father because He had the Father's name.
 - b. Actual meaning: Others come in their own name (or their own authority), but Jesus does not; Jesus comes in His Father's name (on His Father's authority).
 4. John 14:6-11
 - a. Jesus and the Father are one being, not one person.

- b. Jesus said, "I am in the Father," not, "I am the Father."
 - c. The statement, "the Father is in Me," does not mean Jesus is the Father; compare John 14:20; 17:21-23.
- 5. Colossians 2:9
 - a. Oneness argument: The Godhead, which is the entire being of God, is in Jesus; Jesus is not the Godhead.
 - b. Trinitarian interpretation; "Godhead" means Deity, the state of being God, the nature of God; thus Jesus is fully God, but not the only person who is God. Since Oneness makes "the Godhead" = the Father, they cannot say that Jesus is "not in the Godhead," since Jesus is in the Father (John 10:38; 14:10, 11; 17:21).
- E. The Son existed before His incarnation, even before creation.
 - 1. Prov. 30:4. This is not a predictive prophecy; "prophecy" in 30:1 translates *massa*, which is rendered elsewhere as "burden."
 - 2. The Son created all things: see V.E.1.
 - 3. Jesus was "with" (*pros* or *para*) God the Father before creation: John 1:1; 17:5; *pros* in John 1:1 does not mean "pertaining to," although it does in Hebrews 2:17; 5:1.
 - 4. These statements cannot be dismissed as true in God's foreknowledge.
 - a. We are all in God's mind before creation; yet such passages as John 1:1 and John 17:5 clearly mean to say something unusual about Christ.
 - b. To say that all things were created through Christ means He must have existed at creation.
 - c. No one else in Scripture is ever said to have been with God before creation.
- F. Jesus is not the Holy Spirit
 - 1. The Holy Spirit is "another Comforter" (John 14:16; compare 1 John 2:1).
 - 2. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit (John 15:26; 16:7).
 - 3. The Holy Spirit exhibits humility (John 16:13) and seeks to glorify Jesus (John 16:14).
 - 4. The Son and the Holy Spirit are distinguished as two persons in Matt. 28:19.
 - 5. The Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus (Luke 3:22).
 - 6. Texts commonly used to prove that Jesus is the Holy Spirit
 - a. 2 Cor. 3:17 -- the Spirit is here called "Lord" in the sense of being Yahweh or God, not Jesus; note Acts 28:25-27 cf. Isa.6:8-10.
 - b. 1 Cor. 15:45 -- Jesus is "a life-giving Spirit," not in the sense that He is the Holy Spirit whom He sent at Pentecost, but in the sense that He is the glorified God-man; and as God He is Spirit by nature. All three persons of the Trinity are Spirit, though there are not three divine Spirits; and only one person is designated "the Holy Spirit."
 - c. Rom. 8:27,34 -- the fact that two persons intercede for us is consistent with the fact that we have two Advocates (John 14:16; 1 John 2:1).
 - d. John 14:18 -- Jesus here refers to His appearances to the disciples after the resurrection (compare 14:19), not to the coming of the Spirit.
- G. The Father is not the Holy Spirit
 - 1. The Father sent the Holy Spirit (John 14:15; 15:26).
 - 2. The Holy Spirit intercedes with the Father for us (Rom. 8:26-27).
 - 3. The Father and the Holy Spirit are distinguished as two persons in Matt. 28:19).
 - 4. Arguments commonly used to prove that the Father is the Holy Spirit.

- a. Matt. 1:18; Luke 1:35 -- it is argued that the Holy Spirit is the Father of the incarnate Son of God; this argument ignores the fact that the "conception" is not a product of physical union between a man and a woman!
- b. The Father and the Holy Spirit are both said to be active in various activities; the resurrection of Jesus (Gal. 1:1; Rom. 8:11), comforting Christians (2 Cor. 1:3-4; John 14:26), sanctifying Christians (Jude 1; 1 Peter 1:2), etc. The most these facts prove is that the two work together; they do not prove the two are one person.

VIII. CONCLUSION: THE BIBLE TEACHES THE TRINITY

- A. All the elements of the doctrine are taught in Scripture
 1. One God
 2. The Father is God
 3. The Son is God
 4. The Holy Spirit is God
 5. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three persons
- B. The Bible does not forbid using extra-biblical language to define and describe biblical truth.
- C. The Bible teaches that "the faith" (which would include the nature of the object of faith, a Triune God) was "delivered once for all to the saints." (Jude 3) Therefore any non-Trinitarian doctrine must be unbiblical.

Epilogue: The Trinity – An Essential Doctrine

We can relish and enjoy God and all of his love toward us fully in light of the glorious and biblical doctrine of the Trinity. This is because the Trinity informs all of God's actions towards man and towards creation – all of them being done out of love because that is the nature of the Trinity and God.

God has always been in a loving relationship with his only begotten Son Jesus through the Holy Spirit. (Jn. 17:24, Jn. 17:5) What is more, we are loved by him because he created us out of love – specifically to share the love he has always had for his Son with us. Ultimately our God is a giving God because he is love by nature and through the Trinity.

Therefore, the Trinity is everything and applies directly to how we are to act after being born again. The heart of the Christian life, in fact, is to love God and love people. (Mk. 12:30-31) Yet we can accomplish this solely because we were created in God's image, out of his love for us, and because he wanted to share with us the love he has always had for his Son, Jesus.

Salvation then through grace alone as a result of God's love restores us to what we were originally meant to be; partakers in the love of the Trinitarian relationship between God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The Trinity is not just biblical, it is essential to Christianity and to the life of the believer.



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