

Lesson 21: The Trinity

Introduction

So far we have learned that there is one God — the Creator of the world.

Deuteronomy 6:4 "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord." There is only one God.

But a careful study of the Scriptures will show that God exists in three Persons, that is, a Godhead manifested in three Persons:

Colossians 2:9 "For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

Objection: How can God be three Persons and one God at the same time? Would that not make three Gods, resembling pagan philosophy and contradicting Deuteronomy 6:4?

Is the doctrine of the Trinity not incomprehensible and contrary to reason?

Isaiah 55:8, 9 teaches us that human reason has no bearing in the study of God, "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."

Neither the words "Trinity" nor "Triune God" can be found in the Scriptures.

Main Content

I Basis of the Doctrine of the Trinity

1. In the Baptism of Jesus in Matthew 3:13-17 we see the Trinity at work: God the Father spoke from heaven, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." God the Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ, was being baptized. God the Holy Spirit descended like a dove and alighted on the Savior.
2. The baptismal formula in Matthew 28:19: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."
3. The benediction in 2 Corinthians 13:14: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen."
4. The creation of man uses plural terms: Genesis 1:26 "And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness: and let them have dominion."

In subsequent lessons we will show that the Son Jesus Christ was true God and that the Holy Spirit is God.

II Illustrations of the Doctrine of the Trinity

1. Shamrock — a three-leaved plant said to have been used by Saint Patrick to illustrate this doctrine. It is but one leaf but it has three distinct sections.
2. Water — revealed in three forms — liquid, ice and steam, yet all three have the same chemical formula, H \blacksquare O.

3. Light — red heat rays that are invisible picturing the Father, yellow light rays that are seen picturing the Son, blue chemical rays that are seen by their effects, picturing the Spirit.

4. Business firm (Smith & Co., three brothers, John, Henry and Peter) — It is one firm with one name but each brother is head of a department. The three work together without friction as a single unit as does the Lord.

5. Alban Douglas — I am only one person but I can be revealed as three persons: My mother sees me as a son. She sees me differently from anyone else and I respond to her in a way that is different from my response to others. My children see me as a father with all that involves. The class sees me as a teacher which is a different relationship. I remain one person but I am revealed as a son, father and teacher at the same time. God is one indivisible God revealed in three separate Persons.

It must be emphasized that the Trinity remains a mystery and that no single illustration can possibly explain everything. However, I believe that we can use these various illustrations to throw some light on this difficult and complex problem. Because God is a Spirit and we are physical it is hard for us to comprehend God. God is infinite while we are finite. To attempt a philosophical explanation of the tri-unity of God is an attempt to put the facts of the infinite into the finite.

III The Trinity Acting in Unity

We firmly believe that there is one God, eternally existing and manifesting Himself to us in three Persons — Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

1. In Creation

God the Father spoke, Genesis 1:3 "And God said, Let there be light."

God the Son was the Word spoken, John 1:1 "In the beginning was the Word."

God the Holy Spirit moved upon the face of the waters, Genesis 1:2, Job 26:12, 13.

2. In the Incarnation

God the Father gave His only Son, John 3:16.

God the Son was born into the world, Luke 2:11.

God the Spirit came upon Mary to cause conception, Luke 1:35.

3. In Redemption

God the Father accepted the sacrifice of Calvary, Hebrews 9:14.

God the Son offered Himself as our substitute, Hebrews 9:14.

God the Spirit — Jesus offered Himself "through the eternal Spirit," Hebrews 9:14.

4. In Salvation

God the Father received the prodigal from the far country, Luke 15:22.

God the Son is the Shepherd that goes to seek the lost sheep, Luke 15:4.

God the Spirit seals the new convert, Ephesians 1:13.

5. In Communion

God the Father invites us to come to Him for fellowship, Ephesians 2:18.

God the Son is the reconciliation, 2 Corinthians 5:19.

God the Spirit effects this union and communion, Ephesians 2:18.

6. In Prayer

God the Father is the One who receives the requests, John 16:23.

God the Son is the One in whose Name we pray, John 16:23.

God the Spirit directs us in our requests, Romans 8:26.

7. In Glory

God the Father is eventually to receive the millennial kingdom, 1 Corinthians 15:24.

God the Son is the One who will change our vile body to one like His, Philippians 3:21.

God the Spirit gives the invitation, Revelation 22:17.

8. In Regeneration

God the Father records the new name in glory, Luke 10:20.

God the Son cleanses the sin in His precious blood, Ephesians 1:7.

God the Spirit performs the transforming miracle of the new birth, John 3:3-6.

IV The Trinity and the Attributes of God

Attribute	God the Father	God the Son	God the Holy Spirit
Eternal	Psalm 90:2	Revelation 1:8, 17	Hebrews 9:14
Omnipotent	1 Peter 1:5	2 Corinthians 12:9	Romans 15:19
Omniscient	Jeremiah 17:10	Revelation 2:23	1 Corinthians 2:11
Omnipresent	Jeremiah 23:24	Matthew 18:20	Psalm 139:7
Holiness	Revelation 15:4	Acts 3:14	Luke 1:15
Truth	John 7:28	Revelation 3:7	1 John 5:6
Benevolent	Romans 2:4	Ephesians 5:25	Nehemiah 9:20
Communion	1 John 1:3	1 John 1:3	2 Corinthians 13:14

Conclusion

Do not be troubled if you cannot understand this perplexing doctrine. "He who would try to understand the Trinity fully will lose his mind. But he who would deny the Trinity will lose his soul." — Lindsell and Woodbridge.

It is a mystery and will remain a mystery until we meet the Lord in glory. However this does not mean that we cannot believe it. We must believe it. God is so different from us; He is a Spirit and we are human beings. I believe that God is honored and made happy by our believing this doctrine. Man, too, is a tripartite being — body, soul and spirit — for we were made in the image and likeness of the Lord. Let us worship this great God — this One who is so superior to us. Let us thank each member of the Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, for that which they have personally done for us.