

Understanding the Biblical Doctrine of the Trinity (Godhead)

By Cooper P. Abrams, III

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INTRODUCTION: From the Second Century to our present age, many people have found the biblical doctrine of the Trinity hard to understand. The doctrine of the Trinity recognizes that God is one God, co-existing in three distinct Persons of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In our material existence, the concept that God is One God, yet exists as three distinct persons, is foreign to us. However, the doctrine of the Godhead (Trinity) is without questions revealed in God's word.

The biblical term "Godhead" (*theiotes*) is used three times in Scripture, Acts 17:29; Romans 1:20; Colossians 2:9. The word "Trinity," which is the theological word Christians use to refer to the Godhead, is not found in Scripture.

- "***Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device***" (Acts 17:29).
- "***For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse***" (Romans 1:20)
- "***For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.***" (Colossians 2:9)

The doctrine states that the Godhead, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, consists of three distinct Persons, yet these three are one God. There are many arguments espoused by those that deny the Trinity, but the most prevalent is: How can God be One God and at the same time be three Persons?

The problem with that question is that it is based in ignorance of what God has said about Himself. The Bible, the Word of God, plainly states the plurality of God and that God is One God. To accept His Word means to believe what God has revealed. The truth of the Trinity is a revealed truth that is established in the credibility of God Himself.

In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus gave His disciples the Great Commission, stating that they were to teach and baptize in the names of the Godhead, "***Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have***

commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

Further 1 John 5:7 states "**For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.**"¹ The fact God did not inspire the writers of Scripture to use the modern word "Trinity" does imply that it is not a biblical truth. However, there are many words and phrases that Christians use to express biblical doctrines that are not found in the Bible. One is the word "rapture." This word also is not found in Scripture, but the phrase "shall be caught up" (*harpagēsometha*) is used in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 and means to "catch away" or in Latin "rapiēmur" meaning to be snatched away. In fact, the word "Bible" is also not found in the Scriptures. Would we dismiss the existence of the Bible because the word is not found in Scripture?²

Those that deny the Trinity are denying the Godhead. They argue that it is physically impossible for three distinct persons to be only one. This article will show that they are both right and wrong. They are right in the sense that it is impossible for us to explain how this can be a reality in our physical/material world. But they are wrong in denying that God is a Triune God. The approach of this paper will be first to authenticate the biblical doctrine by presenting biblical statements attesting to this truth.

One reason those who deny the Trinity do so is the Bible clearly teaches monotheism, meaning that God is One God. (Deut. 4:35-36, 6:4)

- "**Unto thee it was shewed, that thou mightest know that the LORD he is God; there is none else beside him. Out of heaven he made thee to hear his voice, that he might instruct thee: and upon earth he shewed thee his great fire; and thou hearest his words out of the midst of the fire.**" (Deuteronomy 4:35-36)
- "**And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:**" (Deuteronomy 6:5-6)

¹ 1 John 5:7 says, "**For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.**" Some Bible critics have stated that this passage is not authentic because it is not found in some older manuscripts. This verse is found in mss, 61, 88mg, 629, 634mg, 636mg, omega 110, 429mg, 221, and 2318) along with two lectionaries (60, 173) and four fathers, Tertullian, Cyprian, Augustine, and Jerome mention it. However, the biblical doctrine of the Trinity does not rest on one verse of Scripture, but is found throughout the Old and New Testaments. This verse accurately states the doctrine of the Trinity that God is One God in three Persons.

² The word "scripture" *graphe* is found fifty-three times in the Bible.

- “***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 44:6)
- “***I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour.***” (Isaiah 43:11)

The Scriptures unmistakably refer to the plurality of God in the He as exists in Three Persons. Secondly, this paper will present a practical explanation of the doctrine in human terms.

Overwhelmingly, the Bible teaches the Trinitarian concept of one God existing as three persons. The Bible does not teach polytheism, which says that there are three separate Gods called the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Nor does the Bible say God is one person who took three forms or that the God the Father became the Son, who then became the Holy Spirit, as is taught by some false churches. The Bible does not teach that God is only one person or that Jesus is not God, but only God's procreated son.³ The word of God does not teach that Jesus was created.

The Bible specifically states that God is Spirit and was never a man.

- “***God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?***” (Numbers 23:19)
- “***And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man, that he should repent.***” (1 Samuel 15:29)

The Bible further plainly states that Jesus Christ, being God, is eternal, as is the Father. The Apostle John states clearly that Jesus, the Word, was with God in the beginning of the Universe. “***In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men.***” (John 1:1-4) This passage will be explained in detail later in the article.

Jesus Himself plainly refers to eternity.

- “***Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.***” (John 8:58)

³ Arianism is the heretical teaching of Arius (AD 250–336), a Christian presbyter from Alexandria, Egypt, that Jesus did not always exist, but was created by God the Father.

Alfa and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. In the following verse the term Alpha and Omega are defined by God Himself by the phrase “*the beginning and the end*” (verse 8) and “*the first and the last*” (verse 11).

- ***“I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty. . . Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.”*** (Revelation 1:8, 11)
- ***“And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.”*** (Revelation 21:6)
- ***“I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.”*** (Revelation 22:13)

How Does the Bible Teach the Doctrine of the Trinity?

The following chart shows some of the many passages in the Bible from which the doctrine of the Trinity is derived. Note that God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all called God and all have the same attributes, which are attributes that only God has.

THE TRIUNE GODHEAD PRESENTED IN SCRIPTURE

	FATHER	SON	HOLY SPIRIT
Called God	Phil. 1:2	John 1:1,14; Col. 2:9	Acts 5:3-4
Creator	Isa. 64:8; 44:24	John 1:3	Gen. 1:2
Resurrects	1 Thess. 1:10	John 2:19, 10:17	Rom. 8:11
Indwells	2 Cor. 6:16	Col. 1:27	John 14:17
Everywhere	1 Kings 8:27	Matt. 28:20	Psa. 139:7-10
All knowing	1 John 3:20	John 16:30; 21:17	1 Cor. 2:10-11
Sanctifies	1 Thess. 5:23	Heb. 2:11	1 Pet. 1:2
Life giver	Gen. 2:7; John 5:21	John 1:3; 5:21	2 Cor. 3:6,8
Fellowship	1 John 1:3	1 Cor. 1:9	2 Cor. 13:14; Phil. 2:1
Eternal	Psa. 90:2	Micah 5:1-2	Rom. 8:11; Heb. 9:14
A Will	Luke 22:42	Luke 22:42	1 Cor. 12:11
Speaks	Matt. 3:17; Luke 3:22	Luke 5:20; 7:48	Acts 8:29; 11:12; 13:2
Love	John 3:16	Eph. 5: 25	Rom. 15:30

Searches the heart	Jer. 17:10	Rev. 2:23	1 Cor. 2:10
We belong to	John 17:9	John 17:6	
Savior	1 Tim. 1:1; 2:3; 4:10	2 Tim. 1:10; Tit. 1:4; 3:6	
We serve	Matt. 4:10	Col. 3:24	
Believe in	John 14:1	John 14:1	
Gives joy	John 15:9-11	Luke 1:14, John 15:11, 17:13	
Judges	John 8:50	John 5:22, 30	

Passages in the Old Testament that Teach Plurality in the Oneness of God.

Deuteronomy 6:4

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

The Bible, in this verse, emphatically states there is only one God.⁴ "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD" (Deuteronomy 6:4, Mark 12:29). Literally, the verse says, "Hear, O Israel: Jehovah our Elohim is a united Jehovah." The Bible is the inerrant inspired Word of God and this statement can only be understood in that God is telling us He is One God. (See 2 Timothy 3:16-17, 2 Peter 1:21). Yet, this does not mean that within the Godhead there is not a plurality. Scripturally, plurality means, that God is One God existing in three distinct Persons.

The Hebrew word for one is *Echad* and "stresses unity while recognizing diversity with that oneness."⁵ This same word is used in Genesis 2:24, "**Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one (Echad) flesh.**" Therefore, God says that two individuals, Adam and Eve, were one flesh. Exodus 24:3 states ". . . All the people answered with one (*Echad*) voice, and said, All the words which the LORD hath said will we do." Note that all the people, which were a great multitude, replied with one voice. There are many other instances where the word is used to show the oneness of many individuals. In other words, the Hebrew word *Echad* allows for plurality within oneness, allowing God, who is emphatically described as one God, to be three Persons who are One God.

⁴ This is the teaching of "monotheism" which means "one God."

⁵ R. Laird Harris; Gleason L. Archer, Jr; Bruce K Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Chicago:Moody Press, 1980, p30.

There is another Hebrew word that means "one" which is "Yahad." This word is always singular and can only mean one and so its use allows no plurality. God could have used this word in Deuteronomy 6:4, but chose Echad instead, which allows the concept of God being One God who is in essence three individual Persons. Thiessen says, "A unity is, however, not inconsistent with the conception of the trinity; for a unity is not the same as a unit."⁶

This concept can be further seen in the descriptions of the Person of God in the Old Testament:

- The Person of God no one is allowed to see. "***Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live***" (Ex. 33:20).
- The Person of God we can see. "***And the LORD appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day***" (Genesis 18:1, See 2-33). (This is a preincarnate appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ)
- The Person of God that cannot be seen. "***And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.***" (Gen. 1:2). (The Holy Spirit is in essence a spirit and cannot be seen by physical beings)

Genesis 1:1-2

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."

The Old Testament begins by teaching that God is One in three Persons. In Genesis 1:1, the Hebrew name for God is "Elohim" which is used more than two thousand times in the plural form in the Bible.⁷ Further, the name "Elohim" occurs only in Hebrew and in no other Semitic language.⁸ This is a plural noun, but the verb is singular which is not a normal use of grammar. Normally a plural noun would have a plural verb. But, if you wanted to teach that God is one and also a plurality, using the

⁶ Henry Clarence Thiessen, Introductory Lectures in Systematic Theology, Eerdmans:Grand Rapids, 1949, p134.

⁷ Renald E. Showers, *Israel My Glory, God is Triune*, Friends of Israel, January/February 2002, p37.

⁸ The name "Elohim" the Bible calls God occurs only in Hebrew and in no other Semitic language.

unique grammatical construction of using of a plural noun with a singular verb would be used. Therefore, this passage teaches that there is one God who exists in a plurality.

Genesis 1:26

"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness . . . "

Again in Genesis 1:26, God is spoken of as plural. **"And God said, Let us make man in our image . . . "** The word "man" is the word "Adam" and refers to a human being both man and female. The same word for "one" (Echad) is used in Genesis 2:24, speaking of the oneness of a husband and wife. God sees a husband and wife spiritually as being one. This is another verse that helps to establish that two or more can spiritually be one.

Genesis 11:7-8

"Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city."

Genesis 11:7-8 says the LORD scattered the antediluvians abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. God is spoken of in the plural (let "us" go down) and in the singular (Jehovah = "the existing One") at the same time. This passage summarizes the Bible's teaching that God is one, but exists in a plurality of three Persons.

Psalm 45:6-7

"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."

According to Hebrews 1:8-9, God the Father is speaking in Psalm 45, and He is referring to the Son as God. **"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"** (Heb. 1:8-9).

The question is: If the Son Himself was God, why did He address the Father as God? The Son addressed the Father as God for the same reason that the Father addressed the Son as God: because they are both God!

Isaiah 48:16-17

"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, and his Spirit, hath sent me. Thus saith the LORD, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the LORD thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go."

God the Father states He is the "**Lord GOD; I am the Lord thy God.**" He then unmistakably further says He is thy "**Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.**" Isaiah 44:24 proclaims the Redeemer made Israel and the heavens, "**Thus saith the LORD, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the LORD that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself.**" Both verses refer to the promised Messiah who is both Jesus and God. Jesus is the Redeemer. The LORD (Jehovah) states that He is the Creator. Therefore, the Bible is saying that it is God (Jehovah) the Father who is the Creator. At the same time, the Bible is stating that Jesus Christ is the Creator. (See John 1:3-4, Eph. 3:9, Col. 1: 16)

Jeremiah 23:5-6

"Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."

The verse identifies the person speaking as being "the Lord" (Jehovah) and Jehovah is talking about another person who, in the future, will come to earth. David's descendent, a King who will reign, prosper and will judge the earth. Jehovah then gives His name as "**JEHOVAH OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.**" This is a reference to the promised Messiah, who will be a man and a descendant of David. God the Father identifies Himself in the Old Testament as "Jehovah" and here He says the Messiah's name is also called "Jehovah" (insert comma) which is the sacred name of God. It would be blasphemy to call any man "Jehovah" yet this is plainly the name by which the Messiah would be called. There can be no mistake that God the Father is saying the Messiah Jesus is God.

Isaiah 9:6

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

This is another prophecy foretelling the birth of the Messiah. Note that the Messiah is called "The mighty God, The everlasting Father." There can be no doubt that this passage is saying a human child would be born who is identified as God and the Father. Why would God the Father state that the Messiah, a man, is God and the Father if He was not? Proverbs 30:4-5 states God's words are pure, "**Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what is his name, and what is his son's name, if thou canst tell? Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him.**" God is saying His words are pure and that He is the Creator and He has a Son. Clearly this passage is saying that Jesus Christ (Christ = Messiah) is God incarnate in man.

NEW TESTAMENT PASSAGES THAT TEACH THE TRINITY

The New Testament clearly states that Jesus is God (John 1:1, 14); the Father is God (Phil. 1:2); and the Holy Spirit is God (Acts 5:3-4). Since the Son speaks to the Father, they are separate persons (John 17). Since the Holy Spirit speaks also (Acts 13:2), He, too, is a separate person. There can be no question that the New Testament proclaims there is only One God and that He exists in three distinct persons.

John 1:1, 14-15

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. . . .And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me."

The verse emphatically states that the "Word" (Logos) was God. John 1:14-15 unmistakably proclaims that the "Word" was made flesh and this establishes the incarnation of God. God came to earth as a man. The passage unquestionably identifies Jesus Christ as the Word, who was God, stating that John the Baptist bare witness of Him.

John 1:3 teaches that it was Jesus Christ, the Word (Logos) who created all things. "**All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made**" (John 1:3) However, Genesis 1:1 states "**In the beginning God (Elohim) created the heavens and the earth.**" This passage without a doubt establishes the deity of Jesus Christ, affirming that He is God and that He created all things. Speaking of Christ Colossians 1:16 states, "**For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him.**" Further, Colossians 1:17 adds "**And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.**" (See Heb. 1:3, 10)

God plainly states in Exodus 34:14 that man is not to worship any other God. "**For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.**" Colossians 1:18 states that Jesus is to have the preeminence in all things. "**And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence**" (Col. 1:18). Further, Jesus was worshiped many times while on earth. (See Matt. 2:11, 15:25, 28:17; Mark 3:11, 5:6, 33, 14:33 15:19; Luke 5:8; 8:28, 41, 17:16, 24:52; John 9:38; Rev. 5:14) Jesus accepted the worship of men because He is God.

Obviously, there is a pattern presented by these Scriptures. God the Father is emphatically said to have created the heavens and the earth and at the same time Jesus is proclaimed to be the Creator. In Genesis 1:2, the Holy Spirit is shown as having "moved" upon the face of the waters." (Also see Psalms 104:30) The only way these are true because is if God the Father, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are one God.

John 8:58

"Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am."

In John 8:58 Jesus ended a confrontational discourse with the religious Jews and proclaimed that He was "*I am*," a name that only applies to God the Father. The Jews then rioted and took up stones to kill Jesus, but He eluded them and passed through the midst of them unharmed. What caused them to riot was that Jesus said plainly that He was Jehovah God, the "**Self-Existent One.**" (Exodus 3:14) Using the name "***I am,***" He identified Himself as the One who sent Moses to the children of Israel when they were in captivity in Egypt. The Jews fully understood what He had said and were so angry with Him making the statement that they rushed to kill Him. There can be no mistake that Jesus stated He was Jehovah God, which certainly confirms the biblical doctrine of the Trinity.

John 10:30

"I and my Father are one."

In John 10:30, Jesus said that "**I and my Father are one.**" The word "One" is in the neuter gender. This statement rules out the meaning that they are only one in purpose as some misinterpret this verse to say. It affirms that Jesus and God are separate persons, but one God, with the Holy Spirit. The verse says they are in perfect unity in their natures and actions. Jesus emphatically stated on this occasion that He was God. The Jews who heard Him saw a man standing before them and they fully understood what He had just stated. They were so offended at His statement that they took up stones to put Him to death, "**because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God**" (John 20:33b) These Jews fully understood that God presents Himself in the Old Testament as monotheistic, which in their minds precluded that Jesus could be God also.⁹ Here again the Bible unmistakably tells us from Christ's own words that God the Father and Jesus Christ are One.

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."

The angel announced to Joseph that Mary was with child and the Son she would give birth to would be called "Emmanuel," meaning God with us. Matthew clearly claimed not only that Christ was born of a virgin, but that this was anticipated by the prophecy of Isaiah as being the method by which God would become a man.¹⁰

1 Timothy 3:16

"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."

This passage begins with "without controversy" as if anticipating those who would deny the Trinity. It then soundly affirms the doctrine. The phrase "without controversy" means simply "obviously" or "beyond all question." The next statement

⁹ "Thou shalt have no other gods before me(*insert period*)" (Exodus 20:3)

¹⁰ . John F. Walvoord, *Matthew Thy Kingdom Come*, Chicago:Moody Press, 1974, p20

"The mystery of Godliness is great" denotes the importance and magnitude of this now revealed mystery or truth that was not revealed in the Old Testament. A mystery in the Bible is simply a previously unrevealed truth. In other words, in the Old Testament this truth was not stated.

The mystery is that "*God was manifest in the flesh!*" This is as straightforward a statement as can be made on the matter. This verse says that God is manifested in the flesh or God is incarnate in flesh. The Greek word is "*phneroo*" meaning, "*to make visible.*" (See John 1:1-14, 14:7, Col. 1:15, 1 Tim. 1:17) Jesus was "*justified in the Spirit*" proclaiming that it was not the flesh that justified, but the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ was thus vindicated in the Spirit at His resurrection. Some believe this means Jesus was "*seen of angels*" but the word is "*angelos*" which means a messenger. Contextually, it is referring to the Apostles who saw the Lord in the flesh and preached the Gospel to the Gentiles. That Jesus was "*preached among the Gentiles*" refers to the scope of His ministry that He came to save all nations, not just the Jews. He was more than the Jewish Messiah, but was the Savior of the world. Jesus was "*believed on in the world*" being proven to be the Redeemer and is believed on and accepted as Savior by those who seek after God. He was then "*received up into glory* when His work was finished. Today Christ is at the right hand of God, making intercession for those who by faith are trusting in Him.

There can be no mistake that this verse reveals that Jesus Christ is God and attests to the fact that Jesus and God are One.

SUMMARY

The verses presented and many others clearly teach that God is One God. These passages state that Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are also God. Thus the Bible affirms one of the most important doctrines in Scripture that God is one God existing in a unity of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The full importance of understanding and accepting this truth is found in the Epistle of 1 John:

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world." (1 John 4:1-3).

It must be noted that the phrase "*Jesus Christ is come in the flesh*" is a direct reference to His deity and that GOD came to the earth in flesh. All men are "born in the flesh," therefore this verse has no significance unless it is referring to God coming in the flesh. John says those that deny this revealed truth of the Trinity are not of God and the denial of this doctrine comes from the spirit of the antichrist who is directed by Satan.

The biblical doctrine of the Trinity was not invented by man or any church. Its origin is in the plain and unmistakable statements made throughout the Bible. It is revealed truth and a part of salvation. When a person comes to God he must accept who He is and what is His revealed nature.

"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. " (Hebrews 11:6)

How Can We Understand that God is One God Existing in Three Distinct Persons?

How can we understand that God can be One God, yet be three distinct persons? The answer is really quite simple and easy to understand if we accept that the Bible is the very word of God and what we are reading is God's revelation to man about Himself. Thiessen states, "His (God) being is simple; man's is compound, having both a material and an immaterial part. But God is spirit and is not susceptible of such division."¹¹

Is it reasonable for us to demand that we understand perfectly everything about our Magnificent and Almighty God? Do we understand fully everything we believe and know to be true? Do we fully understand our own selves or most of the things in the world in which we live? How can we expect fully to understand the eternal, wholly spiritual, Almighty God?

The answer is "No." Man knows very little about the world in which he exists. 2 Timothy 2:23 rightly warns us to avoid foolish and unlearned questions.¹² A foolish question is one that is used to attempt to overthrow a plain Bible teaching, such as questions about the Trinity, or the resurrection, or the incarnation of Christ, or the condition of man after death.

The false teacher asks foolish questions, which causes people to doubt the Word of God. The true teacher encourages people to believe the Word of God despite whether its teachings seem perfectly reasonable to human understanding or not.¹³ The

¹¹ Thiessen, p134.

¹² "**But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes.**" (2 Timothy 2:23)

¹³ David Cloud, *Way of Life Encyclopedia of the Bible and Christianity*, Computer Version 4.0, 2000. "Trinity."

problem is not with what the Bible reveals, but with man's unwillingness to accept and understand what God has stated as fact.

The following illustration is not a perfect example, but helps illustrate a point. We all believe in gravity but we cannot explain it. Our inability to explain or even understand what gravity is does not mean there is no gravity. It exists and we can see what it does. We cannot see it or touch it or in any way explain what it is. Gravity is the most important force in the universe and affects everything in it. The physicist tells us even the smallest particle of subatomic matter is held in place by the force of gravity, yet no one knows what gravity is or what makes it work.

Wouldn't it be reasonable and logical to accept, that although we do not understand with human reasoning how it is possible, that God is three Persons and One God? If we deny the possibility of the Trinity then we must also declare that we are omniscient, which means our knowledge is infinite and absolute. Do we know everything there is to know about everything? Do we even know everything about our physical world? How then can we honestly proclaim we know everything in the realm of the spiritual world where God exists? We are in essence a spiritual being, but physical. When we consider, as this paper shows, that the Bible, that is God's own word on the matter, plainly establishes Trinity, how can we set ourselves up as judges of God's word and declare that God is not a Trinity with your limited knowledge of the universe? How can any man set himself up as an authority on something he cannot explain? Is it logical to say because I cannot explain or understand the Trinity in physical terms that it does not exist? The answer is obvious.

Do we deny the existence of gravity, atoms, electrons, protons, and the atomic particles of the Universe because we do not know how they exist or can explain them? We accept it by faith because scientists, who we trust, tell us they exist and we accept their statements. They reveal to us the existence of atomic and subatomic particles that we cannot see. Do we call the scientists, who have knowledge of these things, liars because we cannot understand or see what they reveal to us? In a similar way we accept the truth of the Trinity, although not being able to fully understand it or explain it, because God, who certainly knows who He is, has revealed it to us in His written word.

It is a fact that those who deny the Trinity also deny the clear teachings of God's word. The cults and false religions deny the deity of Jesus Christ, and the cardinal doctrines of the Bible. The basic flaw in their theology is although they proclaim to have God's truth, they in fact deny God's statements about Himself and truth. Can such as these have any credibility in having any knowledge of God? If they did not get their knowledge from God's word, where could it come from except faulty human reasoning?

Why then is it so hard for some men to accept the biblical truth of the Trinity? The key to this misunderstanding lies in man's minimizing our infinite Creator. In other words, making Him finite like us? This act demeans and debases our omnipotent and glorious God and brings Him down to the level of man. God is not man and the

immensity of His being is so far beyond our finite understanding that we cannot even begin comprehend who He truly is. However, He has revealed to us through His word the Bible; all we need to know about Him and thereby to fully believe and trust in Him.¹⁴

John 3:19 says, "***And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.***" The verse says that "light," referring to God's revealed truth of Jesus Christ the Savior, has been given to us by God, but because of his sin man refuses to accept it.

We must understand that man lives in a material universe and is subject to physical limitations of this world and to time and space. However, God exists in a spiritual world outside our universe that is not material nor subject to time and space. God says He is Spirit (John 4:24), which is simply revealed truth from God about Himself. God does not explain what a Spirit is because we cannot understand it. There is nothing in our material world to compare with the spiritual realm of God. But we do know that it is different from the material universe that we live in, and that God's essence as spirit is different ours.

In our physical world we can only describe something by using words, terms or things that are familiar to us. If I try to tell someone what a house is, I have the advantage of that person having seen other houses. Therefore, even though there are many different kinds of houses, it is understand what the word "house" is generally referring to. Yet, when we try to describe God as a Spirit or the Trinity, we have no such advantage. There is nothing in our material world with which we can compare a Spirit or the spiritual realm wherein God exists.

God exists outside the universe and in a spiritual dimension beyond our human ability to perceive. The physical laws of our universe do not apply. Our world is material, not spiritual, and therefore the concept is foreign to us. This is why God does not attempt to explain the Trinity to us in His word. We cannot understand it because we are material beings and only know material things. Yet, the doctrine is true because God has revealed it to us as fact in His word. The Bible teaches that God is one God existing in three distinct persons; God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Those who believe and trust God believe this doctrine because it is revealed truth from God, who cannot lie.

The Bible also reveals that God is eternal, yet some of the same people who deny the Trinity, will accept that God is eternal and infinite. Yet, the idea that God is an eternal God is just as foreign to our understanding as the Trinity. In our world nothing is eternal and everything has a beginning and will have an end, but not so with God, who

¹⁴ ***For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.***" (Isaiah 55:9)

is not subject to time and exists in a realm in which there is no time. Psalm 90:2, states, "***Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.***" The term "everlasting to everlasting" means that God is infinite in time, having no beginning or end. This is another revealed truth that we cannot comprehend. Man, is as a material being, is limited by time and space. Being limited by time, we cannot conceive of an infinite God that exists outside time. This universe, including you and me, had a physical beginning and we will have a physical end. Yet, says He is eternal, having no beginning or ending. God reveals Himself in His word saying "***I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last***" (Rev. 22:13).

Many who deny the doctrine of the Trinity also deny other clear teachings of the Bible such as the deity of Jesus Christ, salvation by grace apart from works, the miracles, the prophecies, and a host of other cardinal doctrines God has revealed to us. These truths are the supernatural works of God. Man is not able mentally to perceive of God's unity, spirituality, independence, immutability, eternity and immensity. Drawing from man's limited material existence and prejudice, those that deny these carnal doctrines conclude that these things are impossible in a material world and therefore illogically proclaim they do not exist. Humanly speaking, the supernatural acts of God are impossible for mortals in a material universe to understand.

What so many fail to understand is that God is a supernatural Being. He is not limited to the restrictions of a material universe. God is Spirit and thus a supernatural Being that exists outside the universe. He, from the realm of His spiritual dimension called Heaven, drawing from His infinite power, created our material universe "*ex nihilo*," which means out of nothing. Being supernatural, which means being beyond material limitations, God, simply spoke the universe into being. That, too, is a reality we cannot comprehend. In our material world it is impossible to create something out of absolutely nothing. Yet, with God all things are possible.¹⁵

No one can mistake that the Bible is a supernatural Book which reveals the supernatural works of God in creating and working with man through the ages. The Bible presents mankind with God's ultimate and supernatural plan; that man, by simple faith in Jesus Christ the Savior, can have forgiveness for sins from his Creator, receive eternal life, and receive the spiritual nature of God. Those who believe and receive Jesus Christ as their Savior become a part of Heaven.

True Christians should not be frustrated because the world does not understand the clear teachings of the Bible. It is the ministry of God, the Holy Spirit, to reveal truth, but one cannot understand spiritual things until they are spiritually reborn. The

¹⁵ "***But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.***" (Matthew 19:26)

beginning of wisdom is the fear of God. (See Prov. 9:10) That means accepting that He is who He is and humbling oneself to before Him as one's maker.

The unbeliever, by his unbelief, rejects God and does not submit himself to God. He cannot understand the things of God because he does not have the capacity to do so. He has not truly accepted God and he is bound to his earthly and carnal understanding because he has not received the new nature of God and thereby has not become a "new man" in Christ Jesus. (See Eph. 4:24, Col. 3:10)

God explains this in 1 Corinthians 2:14, "***But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.***"

Conclusion

The carnal man has a false idea of God because he tries to liken God to being like himself and his material world. This limits one from understanding the reality of who God is. Further, man, instead of believing in our infinite Creator, invents degraded gods that are like himself.

"For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things." (Romans 1:20-23)

The mark of cults or false religions is that they all have gods who are made in man's image and are limited in power and existence to material limitations. (Also see Isa. 44:9-18)

That is what Romans 1:21-23 says: "*Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.*" (Underline added)

The false gods that men invent are always patterned after man himself or things he sees in nature. Some false religions go as far as to teach that God was a man or that

men can become gods. In other words, they deify man. Deify means to make something a god and worship it. God says He created man . . . and it is foolishness to suggest that man created God. Yet, this is plainly what is done when Almighty God is said to be a man or that a finite man could become God. The perfect example of this absurd idea is found in Mormonism. How could a man, born into the universe that existed before he did, be the creator of himself and the universe? God, as Genesis 1 and 2 states, created all things. Man was created on the sixth day of the Creation week and was the very last act of creation. It was God who created man.

Most of mankind has no real idea of who God really is. The gods of unbelieving men are small and do not take into account the immensity of Almighty God as He is presented in the Bible. J.B. Phillips wrote a book in 1952 called, "Your God Is Too Small." He exposed the misconceptions that many have about God, in that their understanding of God superimposed upon Him human characteristics.¹⁶ In His greatness and power the Bible says He spoke the universe into existence. God affirms this truth saying, "***Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.***" (Hebrews 11:3)

Believing that God is a man or any material being shows one does not comprehend the true omnipotent (all powerful), omnipresent (present everywhere), omniscient (knows all things) nature of our sovereign God and Creator, nor does he bow in humility to his Creator. Like Satan, the lost man seeks to elevate himself to God's level and above. A man in denying the truth of the Trinity sets himself as God's judge and foolishly declares God cannot be what He says He is.

Therefore, many men miss the truth and reality of God's essence because they ignorantly try to perceive Him as being as a physical being, as are they. God has revealed Himself to all men in His word, the Bible, and it would behoove all men to believe what their Creator has said about Himself. Paul stated God's mandate when addressing the unbelieving Athenians as recorded in Acts 17:30 "***And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent.***"

The Psalmist declared the unlimited greatest of God "***By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses.***" (Psalms 33:6-7)

A person must understand the immensity of God and His power. Seeking to comprehend God one must take into account that he is not trying to understand that which is physical or material, but supernatural and beyond man's ability to comprehend.

¹⁶ J.B. Phillips, "Your God is Too Small", New York:Touchstone, 1997.

Not being able to comprehend God we must simply take Him at His word as to who He is.

John said, "***Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world***" (1 John 4:1-3).

The Bible without question affirms the plurality of God and the only way to understand God's plurality is to accept that God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are One God which establishes the Trinity. John's statement makes it absolutely vital that a person fully believe in the Trinity, which means to accept who and what God really truly is. To believe anything else is to believe in a false god that does not exist.

Because all men are lost in sin, only our supernatural Creator can save this lost and dying world. Only by fully believing in our Creator and God's promise of salvation can one be saved and receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life. The truth of the Trinity is unconditionally tied to accepting Him as He is.

(December 2001, September 2005, February, 2012, August 2013, January 2014)