

THE TRINITY



1. Example

Personal example to help imagine the concept of a 'trinity': *"I am a son to my Mother, a husband to my wife, and a father to my children ... yet I am still only one person!"*

2. Introduction – The Gospel

1 Tim 3:16 And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God [Father] was manifested in the flesh [Jesus], Justified in the [Holy] Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory.

3. The Trinity in the New Testament

a. Jesus' baptism

Mat 3:16-17 As soon as Jesus was baptised, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. 17 And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

For the first time the Trinity, foreshadowed in many ways in the OT, is clearly revealed. The Spirit descends upon the Son and, at the same moment, the Father's voice is heard from heaven.

- Luke 3:22 And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, "This is My beloved Son; in whom I am well pleased."
- John 1:32-33 Then John gave this testimony: "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. 33 I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptise with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptise with the Holy Spirit.'

b. Christian baptism

Mat 28:19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

When we are baptised, we proclaim our acceptance of the scripture-revelation concerning God - the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We confess our belief that there is a God, that there is only one God, that in the one Godhead there is a Father that begets, a Son that is begotten, and a Holy Spirit of both.

We are baptised, **not into the names**, but **into the name**, of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which clearly shows that these three are one, and that their name is one. The distinct mentioning of the three persons in the Trinity, in Christian baptism here is **full proof** of the doctrine of the Trinity.

Through the Lord's revelation, the one true God appears clearly in the NT, as existing in three

Persons: named here "the Father," and "the Son," and "the Holy Spirit." Compare also Mat 3:16 - 17; 1 Cor 12:4 - 6; 2 Cor 13:14; Eph 2:18; 4:4 - 6; 5:18 - 20; 1 Pet 1:2; Jude 20 - 21.

c. Important points about the Trinity

1. In the Trinity, each of these divine Persons has His own personal character, and is clearly distinguished from the other Persons (cp. John 14:16 - 17,26; 15:26; 16:7 - 15). Yet the three Persons are equal in being, power, and glory: each being called "God" (John 6:27; Heb 1:8; Acts 5:3 - 4); each possessing all the divine attributes (James 1:17; Heb 13:8; 9:14); each performing divine works (John 5:21; Rom 8:11); and each receiving divine honours (John 5:23; 2 Cor 13:14).
2. With reference to the order of their activities, the Father is first, the Son is second, and the Holy Spirit is third; the general formula being as follows: **from** the Father (1 Cor 8:6), **through** the Son (John 3:17), **by** the Holy Spirit (Eph 3:5), and **to** the Father (Eph 2:18).

Even so, however, not one of the Persons acts independently of the other Persons; there is always mutual agreement, as our Lord said, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working" (John 5:17); and, "The Son can do nothing by himself" (John 5:19); and again, "I and the Father are one" (John 10:28 - 30).

1. In the NT revelation of God as a tri-personal Being, there is no retreat from the monotheism of the OT (cp. Deu 6:4 - 5 with Mark 12:29 - 30 and Rom 3:30). The three divine Persons are one God, not three gods.

It was necessary in the OT to emphasise first the divine unity in order to guard against polytheistic tendencies. But even in the OT, read in the light of the NT, a plurality of Persons appears within the one true God (cp. Gen 1:26; Isa 6:8; 48:12 with 48:16).

1. The Trinity of God is a great mystery, something wholly beyond human explanation. We can guard against error by holding fast to the facts of divine revelation that:
 - with respect to His Being, God is one;
 - with respect to His Personality, God is three; and
 - we must neither divide the essence, nor confuse the Persons. Yet, in spite of its mystery, the doctrine of the Trinity has always proved to be rich in spiritual and practical values.

The importance attached to the Trinity, in NT revelation, appears in the fact that this doctrine is firmly established in two formulas which are constantly repeated in the hearing of the Church: (1) the formula of baptism, which we've discussed (Mat 28:19); and (2) the formula of benediction as given in 2 Cor 13:14:

- The apostolic benediction in v. 14 states: "*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion [fellowship] of the Holy Spirit, be with you all*". In this way, Paul ends his letter; and in the Church, it is usual and correct to dismiss worshipping assemblies. This plainly proves the doctrine of the gospel, and is an acknowledgement that Father, Son, and Spirit, are three distinct persons, yet only one God:
- The meaning. The grace of Christ, the love of God, and the communion (or communication) of the Holy Spirit: the grace of Christ as Redeemer, the love of God who sent the Redeemer, and all the communications of this grace and love, which come to us by the Holy Spirit; it is the communications of the Holy Spirit that qualify us to receive the grace of Christ and the love of God: we can want nothing else.

4. The Trinity in the Old Testament

a. In Genesis

*Gen 1:26 Then God said, "**Let us** make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."*

*Man's creation was a greater act of divine wisdom and power than that of the other creatures. The account of it is introduced with something of a distinction from the rest. Previously, it had been said, "**Let there be light,**" and "**Let there be a firmament,**" and "**Let the earth, or waters, bring forth**" and so on; but now **the word of command** is turned into **a word of consultation**, "*Let us make man*", for whose sake the Universe and all in it were made.*

Man was to be a creature different from all that had been hitherto made. The three persons of the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, **consult** and **agree** about it, because man, when he was made, was to be dedicated and devoted to Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

*Gen 3:22 And the LORD God said, "The man has now become **like one of us**, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever."*

b. In Joshua

Jos 24:15-28: Joshua challenges the Children of Israel to hold onto their faith, and to express a full commitment to the Lord. Now he sets before them the difficulties of that faith, (v. 19, 20), "*you cannot serve the Lord, for he is a Holy God*", or, as it is in the Hebrew, "**He is the holy Gods**", indicating the mystery of the Trinity, three in one. Our Holy God is: Holy Father, Holy Son, Holy Spirit.

c. In Job

Job 35:10 *But no one says, 'Where is God my Maker, who gives songs in the night,*

Look at "*God is my Maker*", the author of our being, and it is important to remember him as such. However, the Hebrew uses '**God my makers**', in the plural, which is an indication of the Trinity of persons, acting as one single Godhead.

d. In Isaiah

*Isa 6:8 Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, "Whom shall I send, and who **will go for us?**" Then said I, Here am I; send me.*

Isa 48:16 "Come near to Me, hear this: I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; From the time that it was, I was there. And now the Lord GOD [Adoni-Jehovah] and His Spirit Have sent Me."

- Isa 48:16: This is one of the clearest of the OT examples of the Trinity, for the speaker here is not the prophet but the LORD Himself. Cp. v. 12ff.

Isa 48:12-17 "Listen to Me, O Jacob, And Israel, My called: I am He, I am the First, I am also the Last. 13 Indeed My hand has laid the foundation of the earth, And My right hand has stretched out the heavens; When I call to them, They stand up together. 14 "All of you, assemble yourselves, and hear! Who among them has declared these things? The LORD loves him; He shall do His pleasure on Babylon, And His arm shall be against the Chaldeans. 15 I, even I, have spoken; Yes, I have called him, I have brought him, and his way will prosper. 16 "Come near to Me, hear this: I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; From the time that it was, I was there. And now the Lord GOD and His Spirit Have sent Me." 17 Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, The Holy One of Israel: "I am the LORD your God, Who teaches you to profit, Who leads you by the way you should go.

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