

July Questions and Answers Is God three or one?

Franklin Church of Christ
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PM Worship

Introduction:

Did you know “trinity” is not found in the Bible! The concept, however, clearly is. According to *Webster’s New Twentieth Century Dictionary*, the word “trinity” is derived from the Latin “trinitas” meaning threefold or threeness. The Scriptures clearly teach the threeness of God, yet how can they also repeatedly say God is one? That is our question for this month.

Discussion:

- I. What does “Godhead” mean?
 - A. “Godhead” is found three times in the KJV of the New Testament (**Acts 17:29; Romans 1:20; Colossians 2:9**). Each time it translates a different derivative of the Greek word “theos,” denoting deity, divinity, or divine nature: that which pertains to being God. These terms all address the quality, character, essence, substance or being of one who is “God.”
 - B. Since the terms translated Godhead in the KJV (translated “divine nature” and “deity” in NASB) refer to the essence, qualities, character or substance of being God, perhaps another term would suit our purposes of description better: Godhood—used in much the same way we use terms today such as manhood, childhood, motherhood. These terms respectively speak of the essence, qualities, character and substance of being man, child or mother. This is the essence of the terms Godhead and Godhood.
- II. In the Bible we find three to whom the term Godhead or Godhood applies.
 - A. The three are demonstrated by such passages as **Matthew 28:19; II Corinthians 13:14; Ephesians 4:4-6**; and **I Peter 1:2**. We find God the Father, God the Son (Jesus Christ) and God the Spirit. Each of these are demonstrated by the Bible as being God, either directly or by demonstration of character and divine nature.
 - B. Of course, there is no doubt of the Father’s godhood. **John 6:27** and other passages present “God the Father” (KJV). In fact, the godhood of the Father is so accepted that when we speak the word “God,” we typically are referring to the Father.
 - C. The scripture equally represents the godhood of the Son. **John 1:1, 14, 18** demonstrate the Son of God, Jesus the Christ is God. He is divine in nature. **Colossians 2:9** teaches that Jesus was deity in the flesh. How the incarnation worked is a mystery to me and I call into question anyone who claims to know more than simply that godhood and manhood both applied to Jesus while in the flesh. **John 1:1-3** teaches Jesus was in the beginning and, in fact, teaches Jesus’ own self-existence. **John 17:5** further demonstrates Jesus existed not only at the beginning of creation, but before the world was. Jesus Himself makes his eternal existence equal with that of the Father’s in **John 8:58** when He ascribes to Himself the same phrase Jehovah used to define His self-existence to Moses in **Exodus 3:14**.
 - D. Finally, the scripture presents the godhood of the Holy Spirit. **Hebrews 9:14** presents the Spirit as eternal, a trait of godhood. **I Corinthians 2:10-12** demonstrates the omniscience of the Spirit. The omnipresence of the Spirit is demonstrated symbolically in **Revelation 4:5; 5:6**. The seven lamps or seven Spirits are representative of the Holy Spirit having been sent out to the whole earth. The Holy Spirit is equated with godhood in the mere fact that He is so commonly referred to by the phrase “the Spirit of God” (**Matthew 3:16; Romans 8:9; I Corinthians 12:3; Ephesians 4:30; et al**). Additionally, **II Peter 1:21** equates speaking from God with being moved by the Holy Spirit. **Acts 5:3-4** demonstrates lying to the Holy Spirit is on par with more than lying to men, it is lying to God. Finally, the greatest piece of evidence that the Spirit is God comes in **Hebrews 10:15** and **Jeremiah 31:33**. The Hebrew writer’s inspired representation of this quote puts the Spirit and Jehovah on equal ground.
- III. These three, though the same in nature and godhood, are distinct persons.
 - A. **Matthew 3:16-17**, at Jesus’ baptism presents all three members of the Godhead together as distinct individuals. Further investigation demonstrates that these are distinct persons. Father,

Son and Spirit are not simply different titles given to the same person. Nor, are they different aspects or representations of the same person.

- B. The Father is not the Son. In **John 8:17-18**, Jesus Himself, describes the Father and the Son as two distinct individuals. Thus their testimony comprised a testimony of two witnesses.
- C. The Father is not the Spirit. In **John 14:26**, Jesus says the Father will send the Holy Spirit. This is strange language if the Holy Spirit is the Father. I would never say, "I will send myself to you." Neither is Jesus saying the Father will send Himself.
- D. The Son is not the Spirit. In **John 16:7**, Jesus says He must go away for the Spirit to come. If Jesus was the Spirit, He would not have to go away. Additionally, when you cross-reference **John 14:16**, Jesus says that this Spirit who will be sent is not the same helper or comforter, but *another* helper or comforter.

IV. Surprisingly, the Old Testament presents evidence of three persons in the Godhead.

- A. **Genesis 1:1** begins with the Hebrew word for God "elohiym." According to Strong's Enhanced Lexicon, this is the plural of the Hebrew word for God "elowahh." The singular is used in **Deuteronomy 32:17** and others. Of course, we do not know Hebrew, but even the English translations represent this plurality to us in **Genesis 1:26**, "Let Us make man in Our own image."
- B. **Isaiah 48:12-16** presents all three in the Godhead. In the beginning of the passage we read about the One who is first and last, who founded the earth and spread the heavens. At first we think this refers to the Father. But **vs. 16** says this one has been sent by Jehovah and Jehovah's Spirit. This is a prophecy of the Son being sent by the Father and the Spirit.
- C. Some will object that these cases do not represent three in the Godhead because the Jews had no concept of "threeness." The Jews may not recognize it, but it is still there. Consider some other things the Jews did not recognize that are clearly found in the Old Law.
 - 1. The promised kingdom was spiritual, not physical (**Daniel 2:44-45**).
 - 2. The Messiah must suffer and die (**Isaiah 53**).
 - 3. Gentiles would be a part of God's kingdom (**Amos 9:11-12**).

V. How then does the scripture so often describe God as one?

- A. Begin by noticing **Deuteronomy 6:4**.
 - 1. "LORD" translates "Jehovah" and the term translated "God" is the plural term "Elohiym."
 - 2. The term "one" translates "echad." This word is often used to describe numerical value. However, it is also used to describe unity. This same word is used in **Genesis 2:24** to describe the oneness of a husband and wife. While they are two distinct persons, they are still one. When applied to **Genesis 2:24**, we know beyond doubt it refers to unity. Upon further investigation, we will recognize it means the same thing when referring to God.
- B. Look at **James 2:19**.
 - 1. The Greek word translated "one" is "heis." **I Corinthians 3:8** used this word. **Matthew 19:5**, according to Strong's Enhanced Lexicon uses the "irregular feminine" of this same word.
 - 2. This same word is used in **John 17:11, 21**. Jesus prayed that the apostles and all who believe through their word would be one. Yet, the apostles and other believers were not one person. The point was one of unity. Jesus clearly explained the oneness of God. Jesus prayed in this verse that the apostles and other believers be one, just as the Father and the Son are one. Since we know the apostles and believers are not one in number but in unity, the logical conclusion is oneness of God is dealing with unity not number.

Conclusion:

I would be extremely naïve to believe I have answered every question about the trinity. However, I have demonstrated biblically that trinity, though not a Bible word is Biblical. Additionally, I have demonstrated that these three distinct persons are one, showing the passages which describe God as one do not contradict this Biblical concept of trinity. In the long run, this sermon is pointless in your life if you do not submit to being what Christ prayed for in **John 17:20-21**: one with the believers in Christ. That means submitting to the scriptures and being of the same mind with the saints (**I Corinthians 1:10**). **Acts 2:38** only means one thing. You must become of the same mind as the saints, submitting to that passage, repenting and being baptized for the remission of your sins.