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Spiritual Food and Encouragement for Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ

The Trinity

Steve Hulshizer

The doctrine of the Trinity teaches that while there is only one God He consists of three eternal, distinct, and coequally Divine Persons—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

It is common knowledge that the word *trinity* does not appear in the Bible. Some have used this fact to teach that the truth of the Trinity is not in the Bible. However, the fact that the “word” trinity does not appear in the Bible does not mean the “truth” of the Trinity is not a Biblical one.

There are other terms commonly accepted which also do not appear in the Bible, but their truth clearly is taught there. The word *incarnation* does not appear in Scripture, but we know that the Word of God clearly teaches that Christ took on humanity at His birth. The word *sovereignty* is also not in Scripture, but the Scriptures clearly teach that God rules over all things and powers.

Having seen that the absence of the word trinity is not proof that the truth of the Trinity is not in the Bible, let’s see what the Scriptures do teach about this important doctrine.

Progressive Revelation

The Bible gives us God’s “progressive revelation” of Himself and His purposes. By “progressive revelation” we mean that God reveals His truth over time, giving man more truth over time—much like the sun which does not rise in a flash, but rather rises slowly from its predawn light to the brilliance of the noon hour. In the beginning He speaks to us in general terms, and as time goes on He gives us more and more information or truth. It is much like our school years in which we were given the big picture first and as the years went on the subject material became more specific and detailed.

Since God’s revelation of Himself is progressive He does not begin by giving us the detailed truth of the Trinity. This is revealed later with the coming of Jesus Christ and the revelation of His redemptive plan in the New Testament.

Since man is finite and possesses no knowledge of God, except that which God reveals to him, man is not qualified to declare with certainty Who and What God is. John Wesley said, “Bring me a worm that can comprehend a man, and

then I will show you a man that can comprehend the triune God.” It has been wisely said, “God is the only intelligent Being for Whom no mystery exists.” In order to know God we must turn to God’s revelation of Himself in His Word, the Scriptures.

One God

The Bible clearly teaches there is only one God. However, a study of Scripture will show that He is one in several ways.

He is one in uniqueness, meaning He is the only God. “The Lord, He is God; there is none else beside Him.” “I am the first, and I am the last, beside Me there is no god.”

In addition to being one in uniqueness God is also one in unity. “Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is one Lord.” The Hebrew word for “one” is a word which indicates a compound unity. It is used in Genesis 1:5 where we read, “The evening and the morning were the first day”, or “one day.” There were two distinct parts to the “one day.” In Genesis 2:24, speaking of the man joining himself to his wife, we read, “And they shall be one flesh.” Marriage is a compound unity of two people who still keep their individual identity. Again, speaking of the fruit which was found in the promised land by the spies, the Scripture says they “cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes.” There was one cluster consisting of many grapes.

Our world is filled with such compound unities. Of course these examples are not perfect, but they do illustrate this truth. There is the one egg with its three distinct parts—the shell, the yoke, and the white. There is the one orchestra with its many different individuals and instruments. And then there is light which is made of three groups of wave lengths. Each group being distinct from the others, each having its separate function and without which the other two groups would not be light.

While there are many illustrations in life of compound unities the truth of the Trinity is not dependent on such illustrations. The illustrations are not always perfect and more importantly our faith is always to be in the perfect Word of God, rather than in imperfect illustrations.

The Trinity in the Old Testament

God gives us early indications of the compound unity of the Trinity in the Old Testament. Let’s consider a few of them.

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The very first verse of the Bible gives an early indication of this truth. “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” The Hebrew word for “God” in this verse is Elohim. It is a plural word. This has added importance in the Hebrew language, since in Hebrew a word can be singular (one), dual (two), or plural (three or more). Thus God’s name, Elohim, speaks immediately of a God Who is one, yet plural (three or more).

We also see this truth in the personal pronouns referring to God in the account of creation. “Let *us* make man in our image.” “And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of *us*...” Later in connection with the tower of Babel, God said, “Let *us* go down, and there confound their language....”

In Ecclesiastes 12:1 we read, “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.” Here again the word is in the Hebrew plural and could be translated, “Remember now thy Creators.” This is in keeping with Scripture which teaches that each member of the triune Godhead was involved in the creation of the world. Genesis 1:1 and Acts 17:24 speak of God creating the world and all things in it, while Hebrews 1:2, John 1:3 and Colossians 1:16-17 clearly speak of Christ as the Creator and Sustainer of all things. Genesis 1:2 and Job 26:13 would tell us of the Holy Spirit’s part in creation.

In Isaiah 6:8, after Isaiah had heard the seraphims cry, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord” (v. 3), he “heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and Who will go for *us*?” In this connection, John, led of the Holy Spirit, states that Isaiah saw Christ’s glory and spoke concerning Him.

Further study will show other ways in which the truth of the Trinity is indicated in the Old Testament. The cry, “Holy, holy, holy,” the dimensions of the Most Holy Place in the tabernacle (the dwelling place of God’s glory) being a perfect cube (10 x 10 x 10 cubits), and Aaron’s three part benediction are a few examples.

The Trinity in the New Testament

It has been rightly said, “the New Testament is trinitarian to the core,” meaning that the New Testament expands greatly the teaching of the Old Testament concerning this truth.

Trinity Identified

The three divine members of the triune Godhead are clearly identified—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Now these are not just different titles for one God, but distinct titles for the three distinct members of the Godhead, all of Whom are equally God. This can be seen in that the individual members of the Godhead speak to one another, which, of course, would not be true if these were simply three titles for the same Person. The Son speaks

to the Father. The Son speaks of the Father and the Holy Spirit. The Father speaks of the Son, and the Holy Spirit testifies of the Son. It can be clearly seen that there are three distinct personalities, and not just three titles of God.

Each person of the triune Godhead is spoken of as “God.” God the Father is addressed as God by Christ in John 17:3. God the Son is also spoken of as God, as in John 1:1, Heb. 1:8, 9 and in the prophecy of Isaiah concerning the coming Messiah. In Acts 5:3-4 the Holy Spirit is clearly referred to as God.

Since there are clearly three divine persons referred to in Scripture and all three are referred to as God, then the truth of the Trinity is taught in Scripture! This is exactly what the New Testament teaches, despite the efforts of some to teach differently.

The Trinity and the Plan of Redemption

This truth is seen further in God’s redemptive plan. Scripture speaks of a Divine “counsel” in Acts 2:23 and 4:28. In connection with this Divine counsel we see in Ephesians chapter one that the Father selects, the Son saves, and the Holy Spirit seals. God the Father sent God the Son, and the Son sent the Holy Spirit after His resurrection and glorification.

Clearly all three members of the Trinity are involved in man’s salvation. Nowhere is this more evident than in Hebrews 9:14 where the Trinity is spoken of in this regard. “Christ who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God....” It is therefore no wonder that believers in Jesus Christ are to be baptized “in the name (singular) of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

The Trinity and the Attributes of God

Further evidence from Scripture for the truth of the Trinity can be seen in connection with the attributes of God. God is eternal, having no beginning and no end. The Holy Spirit is referred to as eternal in Hebrews 9:14. Christ is called “the first and the last,” which is exactly what we read concerning the eternal God in Isaiah 44:6. “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.”

Holiness is another attribute of God. In keeping with Isaiah’s description of the thrice holy God all three members of the Godhead are referred to as being holy—the Holy Spirit in Acts 5:3, Jesus Christ in Acts 3:14, and God the Father in 1 Peter 1:16.

False Views of God

Atheism denies the very existence of God, yet by doing so atheists claim to know all things. In order to claim “There is no God” they would need to have all knowledge, which would, in fact, make them God. Scripture tells us that God’s general revelation of creation is a clear sign

of His existence and that man is accountable on this basis alone. If there is no God to whom man is accountable, how do we explain the conscience which is universally present in all men? Man must suppress his conscience in order to say there is no God.

Agnosticism, while not denying the existence of God, denies that He can be known. However, God has clearly revealed Himself in creation, through the prophets, in His Word, and in His Son, Jesus Christ. Christ said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." The wonderful story of Scripture is the truth that God has revealed Himself to us and that He has done so in order to reconcile us to Himself.

Deism would claim that God created the world and then withdrew from it, leaving it to itself. However, Scripture tells us that God, despite man's rebellion against Him, has an interest in man and that He continues to maintain this world.

Pantheism, which is very prevalent in the New Age movement today, would tell us that the world is God, and that God is not a personal Being. However, Scripture would teach us that God not only created this world, but that He loved the world and personally came into this world to save lost mankind.

One must then choose between finite man's thoughts of God or God's thoughts as presented in His Word, the Bible. (For further study on the Bible being God's divine revelation to man request the booklet, "Is The Bible Really God's Word?")

Important Truth

The truth of the Trinity is an important one in Scripture. To deny this truth is to deny the Deity of Christ Who clearly claimed to be God. It is for this very reason that many deny the truth of the Trinity as they reject Christ and His claims to be God. (For more teaching on the Deity of Christ request the booklet, "Is Jesus Christ God?")

To deny the truth of the Trinity would also place the redemptive work of Christ in question, for if He is not God then the value of His sacrifice on the cross would be in doubt. In addition, the intercessory work of Christ as High Priest would also come under attack, for if He is not God how could He hear the many prayers of many different saints? The truth of the indwelling Holy Spirit in every believer and the Scriptures themselves would also be in question. For this reason it is not uncommon for those who reject the Person and work of Christ to reject the truth of the Trinity as well. In essence, it is not the truth of the Trinity they reject, but Christ!

It has been wisely pointed out that "no argument has been advanced against the truth of the Trinity other than this truth does not conform to the limitations of the mind of man." In other words, since man cannot explain it fully he rejects it.

What if scientists functioned on this basis and rejected what they can't explain? Certainly they would reject a great deal of what we hold to be true!

Summary

While the Scriptures do not contain the word *trinity*, they clearly contain the truth of the Trinity. This truth states that there is one God and that this one God is a compound unity of three inseparable, distinct, eternal, coequal, and divine persons—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

With our finite minds we may not understand this truth fully, but our faith must rest in God's Word and not in our finite mind's ability to fully understand the infinite God.

The one true God of heaven and earth has revealed Himself to sinful men who have rebelled against Him. This revelation was progressive, beginning with the prophets and ending with the coming of God Himself in the Person of His Son, Jesus Christ.

The wonderful truth is that God took on humanity in the Person of His Son, Jesus Christ, in order to save men and women from the penalty of their sins. In order for a righteous God to forgive sins the penalty of these sins had to be paid for. Just as a righteous human judge can not simply overlook sin, neither can the Divine Judge. Thus, God took it upon Himself to pay the penalty of our sins, which is death.

Will you acknowledge your sins against God and accept Jesus Christ, God the Son, as your personal Savior? If you do, God will put His death to your account, forgive your sins, and give you the gift of eternal life. *

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But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. Gal. 3:11

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Epistle to the Galatians

Steve Hulshizer

It is the thinking of the natural mind that if one is ever to gain a righteous standing with God it will be through some type of effort on his part. It may be through righteous living or the deeds of religion, but it all comes down to self-attainment. He will “earn” God’s favor.

The Biblical truth of being declared righteous by God on the basis of one’s faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ is foolishness to the natural mind. (Rom. 5:1; 1 Cor. 1:18) This is very evident in the minds of the most religious of individuals. To them the idea that one can merely believe God’s report concerning His Christ and be forgiven his sins and declared right in God’s eyes just can’t be. It is just too easy! Man must contribute to his salvation in some way.

It is this very thinking that led to the religious leaders of Christ’s day to be the most adamant in their opposition to Him. If it was true that one is made right with God by faith *alone*, then their religion was not necessary and the leaders would lose their position and power. So it is today!

The Bible records for us a number of occasions of how religious teachers would follow the preaching of the Gospel and make attempts to stir up opposition, or to dissuade those who had accepted the true Gospel. Many different means were used to convince believers to give up their faith in Christ *alone* for salvation. They might mock them, belittle them, disown them, persecute them, or convince them the Gospel they believed was not completely correct. The latter was the method used with the Galatian saints.

It is for this reason the apostle Paul wrote the epistle to the saints in the region of Galatia. Judaizing teachers made a number of accusations in an effort to undermine the truth Paul had preached to them, and which they believed.

The epistle is Paul’s “answers” to these “accusations.” Paul, with his legal mind, now guided by the Holy Spirit, systematically addresses the accusations and this allows the epistle to be easily outlined.

Chapters 1-2 deal with the *accusation that Paul was not an apostle*, and thus his Gospel lacked authority, and did not contain “all” of the truth regarding justification. Paul’s answer was that he was an apostle by way of a glorified Christ. Men were not the source or the means of his calling.

Chapters 3-4 addresses in great depth the *accusation that justification is not by faith “alone.”* The false teachers were making inroads with the idea that one must become Jewish in order to be a Christian. Thus keeping of the Law, including circumcision, was necessary in *addition* to faith in Paul’s Gospel. Paul reminds them that Abraham was justified by faith long before the law was given, and that the law only curses those who did not keep *all* the law *all* the time. (3:10)

Chapters 5-6 are answer to the *accusation that justification by faith alone leads to liberal living.*

If we have presented the Gospel of salvation by grace through faith *alone* we have no doubt faced this accusation. “If this is true then I could just believe the Gospel and then live any way I want to” is a typical response. This of course shows a lack of knowledge concerning the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of those who truly trust in Christ’s work *alone* for salvation. Now instead of a set of external rules, meant only to show man his inability to keep them, there is an indwelling Divine person empowering a new nature desirous of living for the glory of God. (Rom. 8:3-4)

To add the law to the Gospel of Christ was to fall from the principle of grace, for the two are contrary one to the other. (Rom. 11:6) While Paul *declared* the Gospel in Romans, he wonderfully *defended* it in the epistle to the Galatians. *