

Grace OPC High School Sunday Class Teaching Notes			
Year:	1 of 4		Date: 05/06/2003
Quarter:	1 of 4	Theology	
Lesson Title:	God and the Trinity - Part 1		
Lesson Purpose:	To understand the nature of God as taught in the scriptures		

## 1. Introduction

Why is it important to understand God and the Trinity, why are we taking the time to study this topic? The reason for this study is that this doctrine is the core and foundation of our salvation, knowing who God is.

**John 17:3** "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."

**1 John 3:6** "Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him."

It is interesting to note that in Church history God began developing the theology of the church by first developing the theology of God, Christ, and the Trinity. On a more down to earth note the study of who God is is important because as Christians our hearts should burn to know the God who saved us.

**Ex 33:18** "And he [Moses] said, 'Please, show me Your glory.'"

## 2. The Nature of God

### a. How many Gods?

It is clear from the teaching of the Scriptures that there can be only one God. WCF 2.1 teaches us that God is infinite, eternal, immense, most absolute, these qualities do not allow the sharing of space with another God. If God is immense (filling all things) then where would something like God but not God fit?

**Deuteronomy 6:4** "Hear, O Israel; The LORD our God is one LORD."

**1 Corinthians 8:4,6** "As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God by one.... But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him."

### b. Is God unknowable?

Being infinite in being and perfection and incomprehensible means that the creature cannot know God entirely. We can only know things about God and know him through a personal relationship. We could never get our minds all the way around (which is what comprehend means) God.

**Job 11:7-9** "Can you search out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limits of the Almighty? *They are* higher than heaven -- what can you do? Deeper than Sheol -- what can you know? Their measure *is* longer than the earth And broader than the sea."

**Job 26:14** "Lo, these are parts of his ways; but how little a portion is heard of him? but the thunder of his power who can understand?"

Even in the eternal state we will still be creatures and have limits. God on the other hand will always be infinite and eternal. We will never ever be able to fully comprehend God. However, we will in all likelihood be continually growing in our knowledge of God throughout all eternity. Part of the glory of God's plan is that as our knowledge of Him grows so will our joy in him grow.

### c. Does God have a body?

God does not have a body but is pure spirit.

**John 4:24** "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." How would it be possible for God to be everywhere at once if he had a body? How could we move if we were surrounded constantly by the stuff of God's body? But since God is a spirit it is possible for the Apostle to say,

**Acts 17:28** "for in Him we live and move and have our being..."

The Second Person of the Trinity did take to Himself a body but this still does not mean that God has a body, only that one of the persons of the Trinity was joined in his person by a human nature.

What would it be like if God had a body and was still immense? He would fill all things, nothing else could possibly exist. But because God is an infinite spirit we are able to live and move and have our being in Him.

**d. Does God have passions?**

When the confession says that God does not have passions, and that he is immutable, it means that God does not change and is not susceptible to external pressure to change. Note Webster's definition of "passion" in 1917 (See the Appendix). The definition of the word "Passion" has certainly changed over time!

**James 1:17** "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

**Malachi 3:6** "For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."

There are passages where the Scriptures seem to say that God changes His mind or is sorry He has done something, how do we understand these passages?

**Gen 6:6** "And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart."

**Num 25:11** "Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned back My wrath from the children of Israel, because he was zealous with My zeal among them, so that I did not consume the children of Israel in My zeal."

We must understand that God has revealed himself in an "anthropomorphic" way. This means that God describes himself in human terms. Some places God says he has hands or eyes and we know he does not actually have hands or eyes because he is an infinite spirit, here the scripture describes God in language that makes Him sound like a man in his decision making process, but the clear teaching of scripture is that God does not have changes taking place in Himself, He never changes.

**Num 23:19** "God *is* not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?"

If God only described Himself in terms of His absolute and perfect spirit we would have a very difficult time comprehending Him.

**e. Is God forgiving or not?**

How is it that the confession says that God forgives iniquity, transgression, and sin; but it also says that God is most just and terrible in His judgments, hating all sin, and who will by no means clear the guilty (WCF 2.1)? Some may think that this is a contradiction. But this is anything but a contradiction. We who are in Christ Jesus are righteous by having received the righteousness of Christ as our own. God in no way see us as sinners and therefore does not punish us. This teaches us that our God is a wrathful God against sinners. It also teaches us that he has made a way of salvation for us by taking His people's sins and placing them on Jesus Christ, and by giving them Christ's righteousness. This will be covered in greater detail in later lessons.

**3. God and His Creation**

**a. Does God need us?**

Our God is "all-sufficient" according to WCF 2.2 This means that He has no need of any of his creatures. He is completely satisfied, and fulfilled within Himself.

**Acts 17:24-25** "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things."

If this is true then why did God create the world? This is a tough question. One possible answer is that it was in His nature to create this world to perfectly reveal His glory. We certainly do not bring anything of value to God!

**Job 22:2-3** "Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous? or is it gain to him that thou makest thy ways perfect?"

### **b. God's Knowledge**

God's knowledge differs from our knowledge in that God's knowledge is original and exhaustive. This means that God's knowledge is absolutely complete, that there is nothing that he does not know.

**Hebrews 4:13** "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."

**Psalms 147:5** "Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite."

**Acts 15:18** "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world."

That God's knowledge is original means that God's knowledge is the source of all being. Because God knows it, the thing exists as it does. In the New Testament Jesus Christ is described as the Word of God. The Greek word translated "Word" for us is **logos** which always has in its basic meaning the idea of rational thought. Since God does not have a body he does not have a mouth either, so when the Scriptures say that God speaks things into being at the core it means that God thought the thing and it became.

**Genesis 1:3** "Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light."

### **c. The honor due His name**

The Westminster Confession says, "To [God] is due from angels and men, and every other creature, whatsoever worship, service, or obedience he is pleased to require of them." This is true because God has created us for His own purposes, for His own glory, and for His own pleasure.

**Psalms 100:3** "Know that the LORD, He is God; *It is He who* has made us, and not we ourselves; *We are* His people and the sheep of His pasture."

**Psalms 148:1** Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD from the heavens; Praise Him in the heights!

2 Praise Him, all His angels; Praise Him, all His hosts!

3 Praise Him, sun and moon; Praise Him, all you stars of light!

4 Praise Him, you heavens of heavens, And you waters above the heavens!

5 Let them praise the name of the LORD, For He commanded and they were created.

6 He also established them forever and ever; He made a decree which shall not pass away.

7 Praise the LORD from the earth, You great sea creatures and all the depths;

8 Fire and hail, snow and clouds; Stormy wind, fulfilling His word;

9 Mountains and all hills; Fruitful trees and all cedars;

10 Beasts and all cattle; Creeping things and flying fowl;

11 Kings of the earth and all peoples; Princes and all judges of the earth;

12 Both young men and maidens; Old men and children.

13 Let them praise the name of the LORD, For His name alone is exalted; His glory is above the earth and heaven.

14 And He has exalted the horn of His people, The praise of all His saints -- Of the children of Israel, A people near to Him. Praise the LORD!

## **4. Conclusion**

There is a modern praise chorus that goes "Our God is an awesome God, He reigns from Heaven above..." While songs like this tend to be a little light on the theology, this one does express very well the conclusions we should have come to in this study.

1. Our God is awesome, and beyond our comprehension
  - a. He is completely unique and there is no other God.
  - b. He is infinite and perfect in all His attributes.
  - c. God is a spirit and not constrained by a body.
  - d. God never changes, he is always the same.
2. God reigns over all of His creation.

- a. God is a merciful God, and at the same time wrathful and unforgiving toward sinners.
  - i. This is accomplished in the work of Jesus Christ taking His chosen people's sin and giving us His righteousness.
- b. God knows everything about everything. He made it, spoke it into existence, therefore he completely understands His creation.
- c. We owe God, our creator and sustainer, all glory and honor.

## 5. **Appendix**

### Definition from Websters Revised Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language 1913

**Passion** /Pas'sion/ (?), *n.* [F., fr. L. *passio*, fr. *pati*, *passus*, to suffer. See Patient.] **1.** A suffering or enduring of imposed or inflicted pain; any suffering or distress (as, a cardiac *passion*); specifically, the suffering of Christ between the time of the last supper and his death, esp. in the garden upon the cross. "The *passions* of this time." *Wyclif (Rom. viii. 18)*.

To whom also he showed himself alive after his *passion*, by many infallible proofs. *Acts i. 3*.

**2.** The state of being acted upon; subjection to an external agent or influence; a passive condition; -- opposed to *action*.

A body at rest affords us no idea of any active power to move, and, when set in motion, it is rather a *passion* than an action in it. *Locke*.

**3.** Capacity of being affected by external agents; susceptibility of impressions from external agents. [R.]

Moldable and not moldable, scissible and not scissible, and many other *passions* of matter. *Bacon*.

**4.** The state of the mind when it is powerfully acted upon and influenced by something external to itself; the state of any particular faculty which, under such conditions, becomes extremely sensitive or uncontrollably excited; any emotion or sentiment (specifically, love or anger) in a state of abnormal or controlling activity; an extreme or inordinate desire; also, the capacity or susceptibility of being so affected; as, to be in a *passion*; the *passions* of love, hate, jealousy, wrath, ambition, avarice, fear, etc.; a *passion* for war, or for drink; an orator should have *passion* as well as rhetorical skill. "A *passion* fond even to idolatry." *Macaulay*. "Her *passion* is to seek roses." *Lady M. W. Montagu*.

We also are men of like *passions* with you. *Acts xiv. 15*.

The nature of the human mind can not be sufficiently understood, without considering the affections and *passions*, or those modifications or actions of the mind consequent upon the apprehension of certain objects or events in which the mind generally conceives good or evil. *Hutcheson*.

The term *passion*, and its adverb *passionately*, often express a very strong predilection for any pursuit, or object of taste -- a kind of enthusiastic fondness for anything. *Cogan*.

The bravery of his grief did put me

Into a towering *passion*. *Shak*.

The ruling *passion*, be it what it will,

The ruling *passion* conquers reason still. *Pope*.

Who walked in every path of human life,

Felt every *passion*. *Akenside*.

When statesmen are ruled by faction and interest, they can have no *passion* for the glory of their country. *Addison*.

**5.** Disorder of the mind; madness. [Obs.] *Shak*.

**6.** Passion week. See *Passion week*, below. *R. of Gl*.