

Discipleship:
An
Introduction to
Systematic Theology and
Apologetics

The Doctrines of God: The Trinity Part 3

The Heights Church January 24, 2016

The Trinity

Each person of the Trinity has different roles For example:

In creation:

- **The Father spoke the creation into being.** (Genesis 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24.)
- **God the Son carried out the decrees:** All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. John 1:3
- **God the Holy Spirit was present at creation:** And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. Genesis 1:2

The Trinity

Each person of the Trinity has different roles For example:

In redemption

- **The Father designed the plan and sent his son.** making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. Ephesians 1:9-10
- **God the Son obeyed the Father:** For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. John 6:38-40,
- **dying in place of all who trust in Jesus for their salvation:** but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8

The Trinity

Each person of the Trinity has different roles For example:

In redemption

- **God the Holy Spirit was sent by the Father and the Son after Jesus returned to heaven.**

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. John 14:16-17

Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. John 16:7

The Trinity

Each person of the Trinity has different roles For example:

In redemption

- **God the Holy Spirit completed the work planned by the Father and begun by the Son, causing the new birth** That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. John 3:6,
- **God the Holy Spirit sanctifies us:** sanctified by the Holy Spirit.
Romans 15:16
- **God the Holy Spirit empowers Christians for Service:** But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. Acts 1:8

The Trinity

Trinitarian Summary:

1. **Ontological equality (*being equality*):** The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit each have all the attributes of God.
2. **Economic subordination:** The Son is subordinate to the Father and the Father and the Son sent the Holy Spirit.
3. **Unity and Diversity:** All three persons have the same attributes but different roles.
 - God created us male and female yet we are one flesh in marriage. Ephesians 5:31
 - The church has many members but one body. 1 Corinthians 12:12
 - Jews and Gentiles (all races) are united in Christ. Ephesians 2:16; 3:8, 10

The Trinity

Historic Trinity Controversies

Modalism: There is one person who appears to us in three different forms (modes):

- **Clearly emphasizes one God.** I and the father are one. John 10:30
- **It denies the personal relationships within the Trinity.** And when **Jesus** was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the **Spirit of God** descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is **my beloved Son**, with whom I am well pleased.” Matthew 3:16-17
- **It must say that it is an illusion or charade when Jesus prays to the Father.** When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, John 17:1

The Trinity

Historic Trinity Controversies

- **Modalism**: There is one person who appears to us in three different forms (modes):
 - The Son and/or Holy Spirit cannot intercede for us before the Father.
 - It loses the heart of the atonement: namely the Father sent the Son as a substitutionary sacrifice to bear the Father's wrath towards the sins of believers and that the Father saw the sufferings of Jesus as sufficient to satisfy the Father's wrath.
 - If God is one person then he cannot love or communicate without the creation and hence must create the world in contradiction of: God is love. 1 John 4:8 and John 17:24 **Father**, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with **me** where I am, to see **my glory** that you have given me because **you loved me before the foundation of the world**.

The Trinity

Historic Trinity Controversies

- **Arianism**: God the Son was created by God the Father and before the creation of the Son the Holy Spirit did not exist thus
- **Arianism denies the full deity of the Son and Holy Spirit.**
- **Much confusion has and still does exist over the meaning of “beget.”**
- *monogenēs* was translated as **only begotten** in the KJV and NASV. It means one of a kind or unique. The NIV and ESV correctly translate it as **only** (ESV) or **one and only** (NIV). *Monogenēs* is used in John 3:16 “he gave his (*monogenēs*) only Son”
- *gennaō* is the Greek word for beget, literally meaning to bring forth and is usually translated as “born.” “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born (*gennaō*) again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” John 3:3

The Trinity

Historic Trinity Controversies

- **Arianism**: God the Son was created by God the Father and before the creation of the Son the Holy Spirit did not exist.
- By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only (*gennaō*) son, Hebrews 11:17

Arianism interprets the following passages to say the Son is not eternal.

- **In Acts 13:33, Hebrews 1:5 and 5:5 quotes Psalm 2:7** “You are my Son, today I have (*gennaō*) begotten you.”
 - Refers to the Father declaring Jesus is God’s Son at the conclusion of fulfilling his role in redemption in his **human** nature.

The Trinity

Historic Trinity Controversies

- **Arianism**: God the Son was created by God the Father and before the creation of the Son the Holy Spirit did not exist.

He is the image of the invisible God, the **firstborn** of all creation.
(Colossians 1:15)

- **Firstborn (*protokos in Greek*)** is derived from two Greek words. It is best understood as Christ has the privileges and authority of a **first born**. The NIV translates this as firstborn over all creation.
- And I will make him the **firstborn**, the highest of the kings of the earth. (Psalm 89:27) **i.e. the highest ranking one or Lord of lords and King of kings.**
- How Christ was eternally begotten has never been fully defined. It somehow refers to something eternally true of the relationship between the Father and the Son in which the Father has some kind of eternal primacy over the Son, perhaps in response to Gnosticism.

The Trinity

Historic Trinity Controversies

- **Arianism**: God the Son was created by God the Father and before the creation of the Son the Holy Spirit did not exist.
- The Holy Spirit is eternal since it has the same essence as the Father and the Son and if they are eternal the Holy Spirit is eternal.
- Jehovah's Witnesses are modern day Arians.
- The Nicene Creed states that Christ was of "the same substance" as the Father. In Greek he is *homoousios*.
 - *Homo* = same; *ousios* = nature
 - Arius said he is homoiousios; homoi = similar
 - Much of fourth century theology was consumed by the Greek letter iota leading to the popular saying: **It makes not one iota of difference. BUT it does make a huge difference because Jesus is *homoousios*!**

The Trinity

Historic Trinity Controversies

- **Arianism**: God the Son was created by God the Father and before the creation of the Son the Holy Spirit did not exist.
- There are two variations on Arianism that never gained the same following as Arianism:
 - **Subordinationism**: Origen (A.D. 185-254), while trying to protect the distinction of persons, taught The Son is inferior to the Father in being and eternally derives his being from the Father.
 - **Adoptionism**: Jesus lived as an ordinary man until his baptism. Then God adopted him as his Son and gave him supernatural powers.

The Trinity

Historic Trinity Controversies

Tritheism: There are three Gods: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

- **Monistic Tritheism**: The Hindu trinity of Brahma the creator, Vishnu the preserver and Shiva the destroyer are posited as acting harmoniously and as one of the ways the divine order of the universe can be understood.
- **Monotheistic Tritheism**: Muslims, Jews, and Unitarians claim Christians have three Gods.