

## Questions & Answers week 5

### Is the Trinity TRUE?

Many people dismiss the concept of the Trinity. Many have short-circuited their brains trying to understand the concept of the 'Trinity'. And why does it matter, anyway? Today we discover the answer to the question: '**Is the Trinity TRUE?**'

The concept of the Trinity has to do with the nature who God is.

#### ☀ **Hank Hanegraaff**

*"Virtually every theological heresy begins with the misconception of the nature of God."*

Some, like Jehovah's Witnesses, claim that's EXACTLY what WE have done, by carrying the banner of Trinitarianism.

So before we go any further,

1) let's get a **definition of Trinity**.

2) Deal with some **counter arguments**

3) See **what the Scriptures say** as we attempt to answer: **Is the Trinity TRUE?**

**Trinity defined:** *Within the one Being that is God, there exists eternally three coequal and coeternal persons, namely, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.*<sup>14</sup> **3-in-1: tri-unity**

#### **Counter Arguments:**

☀ *The Bible doesn't use the word 'Trinity.'* No. It's originally from the Latin term *trinitas*. It is a term used to 3-in-1 or **tri-unity**. The word *Bible* isn't used in the ancient writings to refer the Scriptures either. Yet we use 'Bible' instead of naming the collection of Scriptures.

☀ *Jesus said: 'The Father is Greater than I.'* (**John 14:28**) Yes He did. I would point the person to the same writing where Jesus is killed for claiming to have equality with God (**John 5:18**) and where Paul writes in **Philippians 2:5-11** about Jesus not clinging to His equality with the Father, but becoming human to die on the cross for our sin.

☀ *Who did Jesus pray to...himself?* This is exactly what a leader from the Kingdom Hall asked me - with a smug look on his face. "No," I replied. "He prayed to the Father." "I corrected his thinking that I was a **MODALIST** - one who believes that God changes modes - Father becomes Son, Son becomes Spirit.



<sup>14</sup> James R. White, *The Forgotten Trinity*, n.d.

## Other Claims

### Jehovah's Witnesses

- Jesus is the most exalted CREATION of God. They actually believe that Jesus is Michael, the Archangel...show me THAT in the Scripture - it's not there.
- The Holy Spirit is not a PERSONAL being, but God's 'active force.' We'll deal with that in a moment when we open the Scripture.

Of course, this doesn't match what the Scripture says. It is a false teaching.

Jesus had warned his disciples that false teachers with false teachings would emerge. The apostle Paul warned the Ephesian elders with these similar words of warning. Notice the Holy Spirit, the Father, & the Son mentioned in this passage.

#### **Acts 20:28–31** (NET)

<sup>28</sup> Watch out for yourselves and for all the flock of which the **Holy Spirit** has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of **God** that he obtained with the blood of his own **Son**.

<sup>29</sup> I know that after I am gone fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.

<sup>30</sup> Even from among your own group men will arise, **teaching perversions of the truth to draw the disciples away after them.** <sup>31</sup> Therefore be alert, remembering that night and day for three years I did not stop warning each one of you with tears.

Although many false teachings arose from that point, over 250 years later it was the teaching of **Arius** a presbyter who pastored a church in suburb of Alexandria that caused much division.<sup>15</sup> It was there that this issue of whether the Trinity was true took center stage.

☼ Arius insisted that *"there was a time when the Son was not."*<sup>16</sup> By this he meant that Jesus was the most highly exalted of all created beings, but a creation of the Creator, none the less.

**Alexander**, the bishop (of Alexandria) over the area he pastored, declared Arius a heretic in a local council in **321**, & **Arius was excommunicated.**<sup>17</sup> Arius left for Palestine and continued to spread the idea that Jesus was a created being, and therefore not equal with the Father.

In **A.D. 325** a group of **318 bishops** from all over the empire gathered to discuss this errant teaching in the city of **Nicea**. Many of these leaders showed up to Nicea bearing the scars of persecution, having suffered for the claims of Jesus.

And so the stage was set. Arius argued that Jesus, the one many of the bishops had suffered for, was not God, but the most exalted creation of God.

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<sup>15</sup> James White, What Really Happened at Nicea? <http://www.equip.org/articles/what-really-happened-at-nicea/>

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

It was at this **Council of Nicea** that Arius was banished and the **Nicene Creed** - signed by all but Arius and two bishops - was established, The Nicene Creed of 325 states:

*We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible;*

*And in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten from the Father, only-begotten, that is, from the substance of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father, through Whom all things came into being, things in heaven and things on earth,*

*Who because of us men and because of our salvation came down, and became incarnate and became man, and suffered, and rose again on the third day, and ascended to the heavens, and will come to judge the living and dead, And in the Holy Spirit.*

*But as for those who say, There was when He was not, and, Before being born He was not, and that He came into existence out of nothing, or who assert that the Son of God is of a different hypostasis or substance, or created, or is subject to alteration or change - these the Catholic [universal, not Roman Catholic] and apostolic Church anathematizes [accursed and kicked out].<sup>18</sup>*

Some say, "See, it wasn't until Nicea that 'the Trinity' was taught." But as we are about to discover, the concept of the Trinity is not a man-made teaching, but a God-revealed truth. Those men echoed what the Scripture taught.

First, Judaism & Christianity are both **MONOTHEISTIC**.

**There is only ONE God: *mono*** (one) ***Theos*** (God). Here's one of MANY examples.

Context: God is reminding the Jewish people who they belong to when He says...

**Isaiah 43:10-11** (ESV)

<sup>10</sup> "You are my witnesses," declares the LORD, "and my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. **Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me.** <sup>11</sup> I, I am the LORD, and besides me there is no savior.

This is one of many OT passages that teach **ONLY ONE GOD**, who is the **ONLY SAVIOR**.

So too, the New Testament teaches **ONLY ONE GOD**, revealed in 3 distinct persons.

**GOD is Trinity** Consider these passages:

- **Jesus' baptism:** the Spirit descends like a dove & the Father speaks: "*This is my son in whom I'm well pleased.*" (Matt. 3:16-17)
- **Great Commission:** baptize in the name of the Father, Son, & Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:18-20)
- **Paul's Letters** often refer to God (Father), Son, & Spirit in the same breath. Here's one example: Rom. 14:17-18; 1 Cor. 12:4-6; 2 Cor. 1:21-22; 13:14; 1 Thes. 1:3-5

**2 Corinthians 13:14** (ESV)

The grace of the **Lord Jesus Christ** and the love of **God** and the fellowship of the **Holy Spirit** be with you all.

And so it should be said that 21st century believers, along with the Council of Nicea in 325, as well as the 1st Century believers are persuaded that the Scriptures teach:

**GOD is Trinity.**

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<sup>18</sup> [http://www.earlychurchtexts.com/public/creed\\_of\\_nicaea\\_325.htm](http://www.earlychurchtexts.com/public/creed_of_nicaea_325.htm)

**The Father is God.** I think most people get this and we could point to many passages to demonstrate this, but I don't think it's necessary. When Jesus & others speak of God, they often are referring to 'The Father.'

## The Son is God.

As we have demonstrated many times at Fellowship, to call Jesus 'the Son of God' was blasphemous in Jesus' day. Listen online to **Killed for a Claim** from [May 24, 2015](#) to dig a little deeper.

The apostles taught that Jesus created all things. John wrote:

### **John 1:1-3** (NET)

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and **the Word was fully God.**<sup>2</sup> The Word was with God in the beginning. <sup>3</sup> **All things were created by him**, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created.

The next verse adds to what John wrote about Jesus, but you need to be ready. This is the first place a Jehovah's Witness will take you to try to demonstrate that Jesus was the first CREATED being.

### **Colossians 1:15** (NET)

<sup>15</sup> He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation [see Ps.89:27],

Psalms 89:27 uses this same word - firstborn, referring to King David:

### **Psalm 89:27** (NET)

I will appoint him to be my firstborn son, the most exalted of the earth's kings.

Here's what is interesting. David wasn't even the **firstborn** in his family! Chronologically, he was the LAST BORN. Clearly, **firstborn** isn't referring to **birth order** but to **superiority over all others**. With that in mind, look at the powerful claim of this passage!

### **Colossians 1:15-20** (NET)

<sup>15</sup> He is the image of the invisible God, the **firstborn over all creation** <sup>16</sup> for **all things in heaven and on earth were created by him**—all things, whether visible or invisible, whether thrones or dominions, whether principalities or powers—**all things were created through him and for him**. <sup>17</sup> He himself is before all things and all things are held together in him. <sup>18</sup> He is the head of the body, the church, as well as the beginning, the firstborn from among the dead, so that he himself may become first in all things. <sup>19</sup> For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in the Son <sup>20</sup> and through him to reconcile all things to himself by making peace through the blood of his cross—through him, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

This is why Jesus could speak to the wind & the waves & they become still. This is why He could walk on water & multiply lunches faster than BK or McD's or even Chick-fil-a! He CREATED EVERYTHING! When the CREATOR speaks, the CREATION leaps to attention! Check out the 3-in-1 phrasing that both Paul & Peter us in their letters.

### **Titus 2:13-14** (NET)

<sup>13</sup> as we wait for the happy fulfillment of our hope in the **glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.** <sup>14</sup> He gave himself for us to set us free from every kind of lawlessness and to purify for himself a people who are truly his, who are eager to do good.

Didn't Isaiah 43:11 say there IS NO OTHER SAVIOR but Yahweh God!

## 2 Peter 1:1 (NET)

<sup>1</sup> From Simeon Peter, a slave and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who through the righteousness of **our God and Savior, Jesus Christ**, have been granted a faith just as precious as ours.

We have demonstrated that: The Father is God. The Son is God...

## The Spirit is God.

☛ **Kyle Idleman** *Fans tend to be comfortable talking about God and Jesus, but the third member is kind of like the Cousin Eddie of the Trinity; you just don't know what to do with him. - Not a Fan*

He makes you uncomfortable and so you rather not discuss him.

But **Jesus wasn't afraid to discuss the Spirit**. He said that the Holy Spirit would come to remind believers what Jesus said as well as indwell each believer's soul! (John 14:17, 26). The Holy Spirit is so prominent in Luke's sequel that some have said we shouldn't call it 'Acts of the Apostles,' but 'Acts of the Holy Spirit' since He is mentioned as the power behind the 1st century church.

☛ As I talked with a precious older JW couple in my home and discussed the Holy Spirit, the sweet lady said, "*The Holy Spirit is not a person. The Holy Spirit is 'God's active force'*".<sup>19</sup> I politely corrected her and asked her to turn to Acts 5.

## Acts 5:3 (NET)

<sup>3</sup> But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to **lie to the Holy Spirit** and keep back for yourself part of the proceeds from the sale of the land?"

I looked at this lady and said, I'm not trying to be mean. I want to ask this exactly the same way I would ask my own mother. How does a person lie to an impersonal force? We continued...

## Acts 5:4 (NET)

<sup>4</sup> Before it was sold, did it not belong to you? And when it was sold, was the money not at your disposal? How have you thought up this deed in your heart? You have not **lied** to people but **to God!**"

So lying to the Holy Spirit is the same as lying to...GOD! I could walk you through other passages where the Holy Spirit is spoken of with authority and personhood throughout Acts (Acts 8:29; 10:19-20; 13:2; 20:28; 21:11), but let's just finish up with one of them.

## Acts 13:2 (NET)

<sup>2</sup> While they were serving the Lord and fasting, **the Holy Spirit said**, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

The Holy Spirit CALLED Barnabas & Saul (aka Paul) as missionaries to other places.

☛ **Dr. James White** in his excellent book ***The Forgotten Trinity***, describes the Trinity as:

*The Father, loving His people and sending the Son. The Son, loving us and giving himself in our place. The Spirit, entering into our lives and conforming us to the image of Christ.*<sup>20</sup>

So what are we to do with all of this? What's our TAKE AWAY?

<sup>19</sup> *Should You Believe the Trinity?* p. 20 (Published 1989 by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.)

<sup>20</sup> kindle 2446

☀️ **Augustine**, that great saint of God who was born AFTER after the 1st Council of Nicea, was once walking upon the shore of the ocean, while greatly perplexed about the doctrine of the Trinity. As he meditated, he observed a little boy with a sea shell, running to the water, filling his shell, and then pouring it into a hole which he had made in the sand. “What are you doing, my little man?” asked Augustine.

“Oh,” replied the boy, “I am trying to put the ocean in this hole.”

Augustine thought, “That is what I am trying to do; I see it now. Standing on the shores of time I am trying to get into this little finite mind things which are infinite.” Let us be content to let God know some things which we cannot know.<sup>21</sup>

**May we stop trying to put the infinite God in a box so we can DISSECT & explain Him. Instead, may we SEEK Him & bask in His goodness to us - mystery and all!**

- Have you lost the WONDER of your Creator - ONE GOD revealed in 3 persons? When's the last time you humbled yourself, hit your knees, & celebrated HOW GREAT HE IS!?!
- Are you struck with the reality that, although you have the Scriptures, you don't SEEK to know the God of the Scriptures?
- Are you walking in disobedience against our Great God? The Father sent the Son to DIE for your sin & now the Holy Spirit convicts your heart...it's time to surrender it all.

## discussion questions

These open-ended questions are designed to help you LIVE what you LEARN with your Family, Friends, or Community Group.

1. How did today's study help you better understand the Trinity?  
Did it bring clarity or stir more questions? Explain your answer.
2. **Read Acts 5:3-4; 8:29; 10:19-20; 13:2; 20:28; 21:11** (in context) to see the prominent role the Holy Spirit plays in Luke's sequel, we made rightly call “Acts of the Holy Spirit”. Does this challenge your view of who the Holy Spirit is? Explain your answer.  
\*Note: the writing doesn't have a title in the text - that is man-made
3. After **reading Col. 1:15-20 & Ps. 89:12** and understanding the context of ‘firstborn’, how might you be ready to kindly correct the person who uses Col. 1 to incorrectly interpret this to mean Jesus was God's first created being?
4. **Read James 1:22**. Share any ‘aha’ moments in today's study - what you learned or how you were challenged. What are you going to DO with what you learned?

\* Share your prayer needs and **PRAY to the FATHER** together!

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<sup>21</sup> Paul Lee Tan, Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times (Garland, TX: Bible Communications, Inc., 1996), 504.