

The term “**canon**” is used to describe the books that are divinely inspired and therefore belong in the Bible. The difficulty in determining the biblical canon is that the Bible does not give us a list of the books that belong in the Bible.

- Determining the canon was a process conducted first by Jewish rabbis and scholars and later by early Christians.

Compared to the New Testament, there was much less controversy over the canon of the Old Testament. Hebrew believers recognized God’s messengers and accepted their writings as inspired of God. While there was undeniably some debate in regard to the Old Testament canon, by A.D. 250 there was nearly universal agreement on the canon of Hebrew Scripture.

The only issue that remained was the Apocrypha, with some debate and discussion continuing today. The vast majority of Hebrew scholars considered the Apocrypha to be good historical and religious documents but not on the same level as the Hebrew Scriptures.

For the New Testament, the process of the recognition and collection began in the first centuries of the Christian church. Very early on, some of the New Testament books were being recognized. Paul considered Luke’s writings to be as authoritative as the Old Testament (1 Timothy 5:18; see also Deuteronomy 25:4 and Luke 10:7).

Peter recognized Paul’s writings as Scripture (2 Peter 3:15-16). Some of the books of the New Testament were being circulated among the churches (Colossians 4:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:27). Clement of Rome mentioned at least eight New Testament books (A.D. 95). Polycarp, a disciple of John the apostle, acknowledged 15 books (A.D. 108). Ignatius of Antioch acknowledged about seven books (A.D. 115). Later, Irenaeus mentioned 21 books (A.D. 185). Hippolytus recognized 22 books (A.D. 170-235). The New Testament books receiving the most controversy were Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2 John and 3 John.

The first “canon” was the Muratorian Canon, which was compiled in AD 170. The Muratorian Canon included all of the New Testament books except Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter and 3 John.

In AD 363, the Council of Laodicea stated that only the Old Testament (along with one book of the Apocrypha) and 26 books of the New Testament (everything but Revelation) were canonical and to be read in the churches. The Council of Hippo (AD 393) and the Council of Carthage (AD 397) also affirmed the same 27 books as authoritative.

The councils followed something similar to the following principles to determine whether a New Testament book was truly inspired by the Holy Spirit:

- 1) Was the author an apostle or have a close connection with an apostle?
- 2) Is the book being accepted by the body of Christ at large?
- 3) Did the book contain consistency of doctrine and orthodox teaching?
- 4) Did the book bear evidence of high moral and spiritual values that would reflect a work of the Holy Spirit?

It was God and God alone, who determined which books belonged in the Bible. The human process of collecting the books of the Bible was flawed but God, in His sovereignty and despite our ignorance and stubbornness, brought the early church to the recognition of the books He had inspired.

## **2. We believe in One God eternally existing in three persons: namely, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit [Ghost]. The Trinity**

The Doctrine of the Trinity: This has always been a deep mystery the finite mind of man cannot fathom. Though it cannot be totally understood, it is a doctrine Christianity embraces.

Jesus said this about the invisible God: John 4:23-24 “But the time is coming—indeed it’s here now—when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The Father is looking for those who will worship Him that way. 24 For God is Spirit, so those who worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth.”

1. God is unique – holy and separate from all His creation.

The Trinity is a way in which God has revealed and made Himself known to man. Although we don’t find the word – Trinity in Scripture, the evidence is there of His Triune Being.

### **In the Old Testament:**

1. Through the **plural names** of Deity in the Old Testament: **Elohim** – “the plural masculine noun name of God” – “Let **US** make man in **Our** own image” Gen.1.
2. Personal pronouns used of Deity – Gen. 1:26, 11:7; Isa. 6:8  
“Then God said, “Let **Us** make human being in **Our** image, to be like **Us**.”  
“Come, let **Us** go down and confuse the people with different languages. Then they won’t be able to understand each other.”

“Then I heard the Lord asking, “Whom should I send as a messenger to this people? Who will go for **Us**?”

3. Theophanies: “A visible manifestation of deity.” Especially “The Angel of the Lord” Gen. 16 & 18.

Gen. 16:7 “The Angel of the Lord found Hagar beside a spring of water in the wilderness, along the road to Shur.”

Angel of the Lord appears to Abraham to tell him of the plans for Sodom and Gomorrah.

4. The Work of Holy Spirit – Gen 1:2; Judges 6:34

“The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.”

“Then the Spirit of the Lord clothed Gideon with power. He blew a ram’s horn as a call to arms and the men of the clan of Abiezer came to him.”

**In The New Testament**: more explicitly taught in the New Testament than the Old:

1. The Baptism of Christ – Matt 3:16, 17 “After His baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened and he [John] saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on Him.”  
The Father speaks from heaven as the Son is in the Jordan River and Holy Spirit descends on Him in the form of a dove.
2. In the Baptismal formula – Matt 28:19 “Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.”
3. The Apostolic Benediction – 2Cor 13:14 “May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”
4. Christ Himself teaches it – John 14:16 “And **I** will ask the **Father**, and he will give you another **Advocate-Holy Spirit- Comforter** who will never leave you.”
5. Father who is God – Rom. 1:7 “I” am writing to all of you in Rome who are loved by God and are called to be His own holy people.”  
Son who is God – Heb 1:8 “But to the **Son He** says, “Your throne, O God, endures forever and ever. You rule with a scepter of justice.”  
Holy Spirit who is God – Acts 5:3, 4 “Then Peter said, “Ananias, why have you let Satan fill your heart? **You lied to the Holy Spirit** and you kept some of the money for yourself. 4 The property was yours to sell or not sell, as you wished. And after selling it, the money was also yours to give away. How could you do something like this? **You weren’t lying to us but to God!**”

The Trinity can be summed up in these words:

- **The Father is all the fullness of the Godhead invisible** – John 1:18 “No one has ever seen God. But the unique One, who is himself God, is near to the Father’s heart. He has revealed God to us.”
- **The Son is all the fullness of the Godhead manifested** – John 1:14-18 “So the Word became human and made His home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen His glory, the glory of the Father’s One and only Son. 15 John testified about Him when he shouted to the crowds, “This is the one I was talking about when I said, ‘Someone is coming after me who is far greater than I am, for He existed long before me.’” 16 From His abundance we have all received one gracious blessing after another. 17 For the law was given through Moses, but God’s unfailing love and faithfulness came through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has ever seen God. But the unique One, who is Himself God, is near to the Father’s heart. He has revealed God to us.”
- **The Holy Spirit is all the fulness of the Godhead action** – 1 Cor 2:9, 10 “That is what the Scriptures mean when they say, “No eye has seen, no ear has heard and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love Him.” 10 But it was to us that God revealed these things by **His Spirit**. For His Spirit searches out everything and shows us God’s deep secrets.”

**The Father is all the fullness of the Godhead invisible, The Son is all the fullness of the Godhead manifested, The Holy Spirit is all the fulness of the Godhead in action.**

Jesus, in His High Priestly prayer of John 17 – promised the presence of the Holy Spirit to be with all believers after His Ascension.

Faith in Trinity is important because:

1. Emphasizes Jesus as the Redeemer
2. Jesus brings to us the will of the Father.
3. The Holy Spirit makes real in us what was accomplished by Jesus.

### **The Development of the Trinity-**

The revelation of God came to those He called while they were living in the context of polytheism [belief in many gods] or dualism [the doctrine the universe is under the dominion of two opposing principles: one of which is good and the other evil.]

Ex: Abraham living in the polytheistic land of Ur and called by Yahweh to follow Him and He would make of him a great nation.

The revelation of God as unique was His way of identifying Himself as Holy and above all other idols or inventions of man's religions.

1. God, unlike any other – Holy, separate
  2. God of all gods.
  3. Lord of all lords
  4. The ONLY ONE
- Through the call to Israel: The Shema: "Hear O Israel: The Lord our God is One."  
Duet 6:4
  - The purpose of the Old Testament revelation was to establish the oneness of God in contrast to the religious context of polytheism of the day, as well as the belief that the Lord God was the Only God Israel was to worship.

### **The Trinity is seen in the prayer life of Jesus to the Father:**

1. Throughout the life of Jesus, He engages in praying to His Father.  
Jesus assumes the distinction between Himself and the Father and His prayer life is marked by the fact He prayed to His Father.
2. Luke 10:21 "At that same time Jesus was filled with the joy of the Holy Spirit, and He said, "O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, thank You for hiding these things from those who think themselves wise and clever and for revealing them to the childlike. Yes, Father, it pleased You to do it this way."
  - The praying and rejoicing that Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit, occurs in a Trinitarian relationship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

### **The Trinity can be seen in Redemption:**

1. When Jesus went to the cross offering Himself in sacrifice to God [Heb 9:14], He did through the eternal Spirit. It was the worshiping Son who worshiped the Father by agency of the Holy Spirit whose sacrifice of Atonement and of praise rose to the Father.
2. Christ was raised up to the Father by the Spirit of Holiness and declared to be the Son of God - Rom. 1:1-14. came of the seed of David but He was declared to be the Son of God. God affirmed that He was His Son when Holy Spirit raised His Son from the dead.
3. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are intimately related: The Father offered His Son; the Son offered Himself; and the Spirit enabled Him.

### **The Trinity working through Regeneration:**

1. The doctrine of regeneration is being born again of the Spirit.
2. The Holy Spirit is the One through whom and in whom the seed of the Word of God is implanted.
3. The Word is first and primarily the Lord Jesus Christ who is Himself the Word and the Truth.
4. The Holy Spirit is implanting Jesus Christ who is Word and Redeemer.
5. The Spirit and the Son join us to the Father and create a new creature. It is a birthing of the Spirit. 2 Cor 5:17 "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."

### **The doctrine of Adoption whereby we become children of God the Father:**

Rom 8:15-17 "So, you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when He adopted you as His own children. Now we call Him, "Abba, Father." 16 For His Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children. 17 And since we are His children, we are his Heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God's glory."

### **The Incarnation**

Christianity is not just another religion with a great teacher but is based on the Incarnation - God with us in Jesus Christ.

One of Jesus' names – "Emmanuel" itself means "God with us."

- Immanuel is a masculine Hebrew name meaning "God with us" or "God is with us."
- The name Immanuel appears in the Bible three times, twice in the Old Testament book of Isaiah (7:14 and 8:8) and once in the Gospel of Matthew (1:23).
- The Incarnation is the divine Word who is God, the same with God, equal with God, participant with God in divine nature and works.
- He came into this world by the agency of Holy Spirit – born of a Virgin impregnated by Holy Spirit in a supernatural conception.
- Mary was the human agent, the Holy Spirit from the Son of the Most - High in the womb of Mary.
- "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father full of grace and truth." John 1:14