

# THE TRINITY

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While the Bible doesn't give us a detailed account of what God looks like, to guard us against engaging in the degrading system of image worship, yet in the Bible there is much concerning our God.

For example, the Bible tells us that God is a living personality. He's not just a figment of human imagination. God can understand, He can think, He has an intellect, He can laugh, and He can also hate. He is a being with -emotions. All the characteristics of a personality are ascribed to the God of the Bible.

Again the Bible tells us that God is eternal. He has always existed and He also will exist. He is all-powerful and He used that power to not only create the universe but He uses it continually to sustain that creation.

Then the Bible says that God is all-knowing. There is nothing that God doesn't understand. The future is as clear to God as is the past. God knows the end from the beginning. Such is the God of the Bible, a living personality, a God full of compassion and love and mercy, the eternal existing One, who is all-powerful and all-knowing.

Let's not try to limit this God of ours by material things. Too often we tend as Christians to think of God as some grand old hoary-headed being, something like an aged father or an aged grandfather. But that's not the God of the Bible. He is far more than that. He is supreme, and He can't be fully comprehended by human minds. But now I want to go a little further concerning God, and I want to discuss with you what the Bible reveals concerning the composition of the God-Head or the Trinity.

Almost all Christians believe in a trinity. Of course they worship a God-head that's comprised of three personalities. Their ideas concerning the Trinity may vary in the differing branches of the Christian world, but basically they express the thought of three personalities in one God-Head. There are two major exceptions to that idea.

Firstly, the Christadelphians who do not accept a pre existence of Jesus Christ before Bethlehem, and secondly by Jehovah's Witnesses who do not accept the idea of a trinity at all. Their idea of God is one single personality called Jehovah, the Spirit is just His power or influence that emanates from Him, and Jesus Christ is inferior because He was the first of all created beings. And yet to a degree there is a little confusion as to our understanding of the God-Head. In fact, in some churches where God is discussed, church members have the idea of the Father as supreme and Jesus may be as an inferior being.

What does the Bible actually tell us concerning the composition of the God-Head? Do we really worship one God, or do we worship three? What is the significance of the Trinity?

First we'll go into the Old Testament and we will see what picture the Old Testament portrays for us concerning the God we worship.

When you go to the Old Testament most references to God are all inclusive of the Trinity. Distinctions between three personalities are not very often made in the pages of the Old Testament. We don't read often of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. And on a quick reading of the Old Testament you could gather the impression that there was just one personality of the God-Head. There are hundreds of references that suggest that. You can recount them I'm sure. "The Lord thy God shall do this;" "The Lord said;" "The word of the Lord came unto me;" "I would seek God;" "And God said." All these and many hundreds more give the initial impression that there is one and only one personality in the God-Head of the Bible. Now this impression is given for a very special reason, as we'll discover as we go on in this study.

Deuteronomy 6:4. "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord."

That sums up the first impression you receive when you study the question of God in the Old Testament. The initial impression is that there is one God. There is one personality in the God-Head in Heaven above. But as you begin to look into the Old Testament in more detail, you discover even in ancient times clear indications of what this one God actually embraced.

From the very first sentence in the Scripture, from the very first mention of God, there is an indication that there is plurality in the God-Head.

Genesis 1:1. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

Now in the original Hebrew language the word "God" here is the Hebrew word "Elohim" which means God. In the beginning "Elohim" created the heaven and the earth. Now the normal word for "God" in the Old Testament is "El." That means God, and it's found in many places in the Old Testament. It is also included in many names. The Jews liked to use the name of their god in their own name, like in Elisha and Elija and Elimalek. "El" is the word God. The "O" in the Hebrew is a connecting link, and the "him" is equivalent to our letter "S" giving the idea of plurality. And so this word "Elohim" for God, has in it the concept of plurality. It's used in the singular hundreds and hundreds of times when it's translated in the Old Testament. But on occasions it's also translated in the plural. In fact, 250 times in the Old Testament this word "Elohim" is translated "gods," plural. I'll give you one example.

Genesis 3:5. "For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."

The word "gods" there, is the same word "Elohim" as used in Genesis 1:1. Yet when it's referred to God, it's translated singularly. When it's referred to Adam and Eve and when it's referred to the heathen gods in the Old Testament, it's translated 250 separate times in the plural.

Now the majority of references to God is in reality in the Old Testament, in the original language. While they're translated singularly, they do have also the possibility of plurality in the word itself. Now this thought is brought out more clearly in Genesis 1:26.

Genesis 1:26. "And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness...."

There that word "God" is "Elohim", this word that has the concept of plurality in it. God, with the idea of plurality, has said, "Let Us make man in Our image after Our likeness." And so really the Bible is now beginning to say that this one God may embrace a concept of more than one, united together, as the words "Us" and "Our" there in Genesis 1:26 imply. God, Elohim said, "Let Us make man in Our image after Our likeness." The words "Us" and "Our" imply plurality, at least two and maybe even more than two.

Genesis 3:22. "And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of Us...." Plural again. You go again to Genesis 11:7 at the tower of Babel.

Genesis 11:7. "Go to, let Us go down, and their confound their language...."

Plurality in the idea of the God-Head once again. In Isaiah 6:8 you'll remember the story of Isaiah's call, being touched with the coals of fire from off the altar, being cleansed and God calling him, and Isaiah's tremendous response. Now notice Isaiah 6:8.

Isaiah 6:8. "Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send and who will go for Us?"

That's very interesting, isn't it? God is speaking here and God uses the plural "Us" and He uses the singular "I" as well, "Us" indicating plurality, more than one in the God-Head, and "I" indicating that united they speak as one. "Whom shall I send?" and "Who will go for Us?"

Well, so far let me recap in the Old Testament. We've got one God. We have the inference of plurality in the word "Elohim". And then as we look into the Old Testament, with "Us" and "Our" being used frequently by God, we have the indication that the God-Head is comprised of more than one personality spoken collectively as one. But now as we look further into the Old Testament, we get some fleeting glimpses that the God-Head is actually comprised of three separate personalities.

Daniel 7:9, 10. "I, beheld, till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head like the pure wool; His throne was like the fiery flame, and His wheels as burning fire.

10. "A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him: thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened."

Here we have the scene of judgment that Daniel saw in vision, and remember, it is a prophetic vision. So don't be too taken up with the description of God. God's description may have been put in such a way so Daniel could look on the scene. But it does say the judgment was set and the books were opened, and Daniel saw the Ancient of days coming and sitting. So here we have one personality in the God-Head referred to as the Ancient of days. We'll describe Him for the moment as Personality No. 1.

Verses 13, 14. "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought Him near before Him.

14. "And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

Here you'll notice another personality coming into the picture and He is given dominion over all things that's ascribed to Him, and it says, He was one like the Son of man coming to the Ancient of days. So we notice now a second personality and He is called "Son of man." But if you go over to Daniel 3 you'll notice He's also referred to as "Son of God" by Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar saw those three men he had thrown into the fiery furnace. He was amazed they weren't consumed. Their ropes had been burnt off and they were walking freely in the fire. And then he was more amazed when he saw four in the fire instead of three. And so amazed was he, what does it say?

Daniel 3:25. "He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God."

So these two references indicate a personality in the Old Testament called Son of man and called Son of God.

Now there are hundreds of other references to this same personality in His future work as the Messiah, and He's described in prophecy under many different titles.

Isaiah 7:14. "Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel."

He's spoken of as a child of a virgin who shall be called Immanuel or God with Us.

Isaiah 9:6. "For unto Us a child is born, unto Us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

That's interesting, isn't it? So Personality No. 2 in the Old Testament is called The everlasting Father. Besides being called Son of man and Son of God, He's referred to as everlasting Father. In fact, the word "Father" is only used 10 times in the whole of the Old Testament of God, and on this occasion it's used of Personality No. 2.

Then we have a few glimpses of a third personality in the Old Testament. We'll call this one Personality No. 3. This One is called Spirit of God. You read of Him in Genesis 1:2 and Genesis 6:3 and other places, the Spirit of God. Now the Old Testament picture of God is complete. Generally in the Old Testament God is looked on as One. But there are a few references that indicate that there is more than one in the God-Head, and a few fleeting references to show there are three distinct personalities in the God-Head in Heaven above. So when you read these words in the Old Testament, "G" with a capital letter, and "god" in small letters or "L" in capital and "lord" in small in the Old Testament, they generally refer to the Trinity, to the God-Head collectively together as One, three personalities. But God didn't desire that they should be worshiped as three separate gods. They were to be worshiped as One because they were completely united in everything, in purpose, in aim, in motive, and also in desire.

But now what about that other term in the Old Testament, "Jehovah." You read it many hundreds of times in the Old Testament. When you see these words LORD all in capitals or GOD all in capitals, when you see this in the King James Version, that is Jehovah or Yahweh in the original Hebrew of the Old Testament. Psalm 83:18 translates it there as Jehovah. Exodus 6:3 translates it as the LORD appeared to Moses and the burning bush, and it's all in capitals there, indicating that that was Jehovah who appeared to Moses.

Genesis 3:22. "And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of Us."

The LORD in Hebrew is Yahweh or Jehovah. It's all in capitals in the King James Version. The Hebrew for God is "Elohim" because it has a small "o" and a small "d". So it's Jehovah "Elohim" says, "Behold, the man is become as one of L's." Jehovah our God with the idea of plurality says "Us".

Jehovah is a term used here in this verse not of one personality but the whole of the Trinity speaking together collectively as the word "L's" strongly suggests in that verse. Genesis 11:6, 7 says the same thing. It's Jehovah in verse 6, LORD in capitals. Jehovah says, "Let us go down and confound their language." In Isaiah 40:3 you'll notice that the word "Jehovah" is used specifically this time of the second Personality of the God-Head, the Son of man and the Son of God.

There are at least a dozen references in the Bible which shows that Jehovah or Yahweh is used specifically of Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 40:3. "The voice of Him that cries in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD (JEHOVAH), make straight in the desert a highway for our God."

That was a prophetic utterance and it was fulfilled in Matthew 3 when John the Baptist came preparing the way for the Lord in the wilderness. He quotes this verse in Matthew. In Isaiah it's Jehovah. John was to prepare the way for Jehovah, and who did he prepare the way for? For Jesus Christ. So Jesus is Jehovah.

In Hebrews 1 the Father refers to Christ in verses 6-8, and calls Him "God," and then in verses 9-11 He refers to Him as Jehovah. He said, You Lord laid the foundations of the earth and the heavens. And if you go back to Psalm 103 you'll notice that the book of Hebrews is quoting from that very Psalm and it says, Jehovah prepared the foundations of the heaven and the earth. So God the father speaking to Jesus Christ in Hebrews 1 says that your God and Jehovah are the Ones who created the heaven and the earth, clearly showing that Jesus takes the title of Jehovah on a number of occasions.

Therefore we have the Old Testament picture of God. Let's go to the New Testament and see what picture it gives us of the God-Head. Now we get a different picture in the New Testament. For in the New Testament, right at the outset we see that the God-Head is comprised of three distinct personalities when it comes to the plan of salvation. Each member of the God-Head has a different task to perform, and as each one is mentioned separately in His particular role in the salvation plan, they emerge very, very quickly as three separate and distinct personalities. Remember in the Old Testament nobody was really singled out as Father, only ten references to God as Father in the whole of the Old Testament. Even Jesus is called "everlasting Father" in the Old Testament. So no personality in the Old Testament is singled out as Father, but very quickly in the New Testament. Personality No. 1 in the New Testament is called the Father. In Matthew 6:9 Jesus said to pray to God and pray "Our Father." In John 17:1 it says that He wanted to be with the Father where He had been from the foundation of the world.

Now the second Personality quickly emerges as Christ, or Son. He is the Son of God, and He's the Son of man right from the outset of the New Testament. He was only referred to twice in the Old Testament as Son. But really He wasn't referred to directly in the Old Testament as Son at all. The first occasion in Daniel 7 was a prophetic vision of the judgment that was to take place after the cross, and Daniel saw a being coming to claim His kingdom in the judgment, and so He called Him Son of man. But that was after the first advent of Christ. The only other reference to Him as Son in the Old Testament was at the fiery furnace when Nebuchadnezzar, not knowing who the fourth being was in the furnace said, It must be the Son of God or Like the Son of God. It wasn't a direct reference, identifying Him clearly as Son. So He's not really called Son in the Old Testament at all. He's called everlasting Father. He's called mighty God. He's called Jehovah. But in the New Testament, in the salvation plan He's quickly identified as Son. He is only referred to as Son in the plan of salvation.

Philippians 2:5-7. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

6. "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God,

7. "But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men."

Here it says, He was God. He was equal with God, but He emptied Himself and took on Him the form of a servant for our redemption.

Isaiah 9:6. "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

Here it says that He is the mighty God.

Micah 5:2. "But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."

Here it says that He never had a beginning. He was from eternity, from everlasting.

John 17:5, 24. "And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Your own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was.

24. "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me, for Thou loved Me before the foundation of the world."

He Himself says that He was with the Father from the beginning.

John 1:1-3, 14. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

2. "The same was in the beginning with God.

3. "All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made.

14. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth."

Here it says that the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. The Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with the Father. He was with the Holy Spirit, but He was God. And it says there that "without Him was not anything made that was made." Now if the Father made Jesus Christ, that statement is a false statement because Jesus said in the Gospel of John that without Jesus was not anything made that was made. So that means He could never have had a beginning. If He had a beginning then, He was made by somebody or something, and then He didn't make everything. But everything that was made He made, so He existed from eternity as God.

Now the third Personality in the God-Head in the New Testament is the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, and He too is a separate distinct personality. He is a member of the God-Head, and He dwells with man. He leads them to salvation. He encourages them to press on to the kingdom. He abides as the representative of the Trinity, taking Christ's place.

John 14:23. "Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him."

And when He abides with us it says that the Father is there and Jesus is there as well. The Holy Spirit will dwell in you. And yet Jesus said, The Father and I will come and make Our abode with you. When the Holy Spirit was there it was as though the Father and the Son were there as well.

1 Corinthians 3:16. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you."

1 Corinthians 6:19. "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?"

In these two texts the Holy Spirit is called God. It says that our bodies are the temple of God. Our bodies are the temple of the Spirit. The Spirit is God.

Acts 5:3, 4. "But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land.

4. "Whiles it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own power? And why hast thou conceived this thing in your heart? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God."

In Acts 5 Ananias and Sapphira were told, You've lied unto the Holy Ghost. And in the next verse it says, You've lied unto God. The Holy Spirit is called God.

Hebrews 9:14. "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

Here it says that the Holy Spirit like the Father and like the Son is eternal. Now I will give you an illustration to sum up what I am trying to say about the Trinity and what the Bible is saying. Here is an illustration: Here are three young men. It won't be long before they are fully grown men. It won't be long before Mum and Dad won't have boys anymore but grown men. These three young men are growing up. They've become men and they decide to unite together in a partnership in a manufacturing and distributing business, and so they unite forces. They set up their business principles and put their plans together. They prepare for the organization of the business. They give it a common business name that they use together as one, but that they can all use individually and separately as well. But in their council they decide that in running the business they can't all be general managers. That would create a lot of duplication. So after a lot of consultation, No. 1 is appointed to be General Manager. He has the oversight of the whole of the business. But then they need a factory manager. They need one to see that the goods are produced in the factory. And so in their council they decided that No. 2 becomes the Factory Manager. His responsibility is to see that the goods are produced. But it's no use producing goods without selling them. And so they need a sales manager. So No. 3 is appointed Sales Manager.

Now they are all equal partners in the business. They all have the same business name that they can use together or individually. But in the operation of the business they carry out different functions, a general manager, a factory manager, and a sales manager. Now no illustration of God can be complete. But this may help us understand the Trinity a little bit. Here we have three united together in One, all equal, all eternal, in their planning for the salvation of man on this planet. They all take different positions in the operation of that salvation plan. In council, No. 1 is chosen as the general overseer of the plan of salvation, and so He's referred to as the Father when it comes to the salvation plan. We're to address all our prayers, all our requests to Him. But they need a factory manager to produce (let me say very sacredly) the goods of salvation. They need One to take on human flesh and die. And so No. 2 is appointed Factory Manager. He produces the goods of salvation on the cross. But then they have to be sold. And so No. 3 is appointed Sales Manager. He sells the gospel. The Holy Spirit speaks to our hearts. He urges us to repent. He calls us to repent. He calls us to the cross. He calls us to the accepting of the provisions of the cross of Calvary.

And so that gives us a little idea of the Trinity. All equal - all eternal - all one common name, Jehovah. But in the plan of salvation they carry out different functions for your redemption and mine.

John 14:16, 26. "And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever.

26. "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

Jesus links the three together. He says, I will pray the Father. He will send you a comforter. I will send the Comforter in the Father's name. When the Comforter comes We will make our abode with you.

Matthew 28:19. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

Here Jesus links the three together again in the baptismal commission. Baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost - all equal.

2 Corinthians 13:14. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all. Amen."

Here Paul links the three together. They're inseparable in the great benediction. Deuteronomy 6:4. "Hear, O Israel, The LORD our God is one LORD."

Now lets go back to our Hebrew Yahweh. "Elohim" is one Yahweh. The LORD our God is one LORD. Yahweh, Elohim is one Yahweh. Jehovah our Elohim is one Jehovah. What is that really saying to us? It's saying to us that Jehovah our God with the idea of plurality is one JEHOVAH. Three personalities united together as one. But now that word "one" is very interesting. It's a Hebrew word "Echad." and that word "Echad" which is translated "one" there is not the normal word "one" there that is used in the Old Testament. It's a different word. In the Hebrew dictionary "one" means, as one man, together, the same, united into one, a' few. That's an interesting word "Echad". It's like the way we use "one" on some occasions in English. We might speak of a unit of the army and say, They went forward as one man. We might speak of a soccer team that really played above themselves and we say they played as one man, and yet there are eleven in the team. It's a collective idea of a group, or a few together united into one as one man. It's used in Genesis 2:24 of the man and woman.

Genesis 2:24. "Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."

And they two shall be "Echad," as one. Not the normal word for "one." But any person knows that in a marriage there are two separate personalities, two distinct personalities. Now if God can refer to a husband and wife in a marriage vow as one, I don't see any problem at all in referring to three personalities in the God-Head as one in the very same sense. A light bulb can have three wires but it's one light. A rope can have three separate strands but we can call it one rope. A business can have three partners but it can be one business. And so a God-Head can be comprised of three personalities and yet still be referred to as one God.

John 17:22. "And the glory which Thou gave Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one."

Jesus talking to the Father says, I pray that you may be one as You and I are one. The people of God are to be "Echad." The people of God are to be united. The people of God are to be one as Jesus and the Father and the Holy Spirit are one. Separate personalities blended together in perfect harmony in purpose, in work, in character, in plan. Many individuals, different individuals comprising the church of God. Many different personalities in the church, but all to become united, "Echad," all to become one in purpose, in work, in character, in plan. What a standard Christ calls for! And how far we as mortal human beings fall short! Let's pray the Father that we might be one as He and Christ and the Holy Spirit are one. And let's profit from the wonderful example of unity that the Trinity has given us.

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