The Trinity. Study. 26 October 2025

- What is one thing you would love to better understand about God? Discuss.
- Many people would love to better understand the doctrine of the Trinity!

What does Scripture say about the Trinity?

- Do you sometimes wish God had just laid out all the theological facts, rather than embedding them within the complicated narratives describing his dealings with Israel? Discuss.

1. Trinity in the Old Testament. Read and reflect on these passages.

OT emphasises monotheism (in contrast to pagan polytheism) but strong hints of plurality within the godhead.

1. ***Genesis 3:22. And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.***

2. ***Genesis 11:5-7. But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower the people were building. 6 The LORD said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. 7 Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other."***

The Son is presented as God in the Old Testament God

3. ***Psalm 45:6-7. Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever; a sceptre of justice will be the sceptre of your kingdom. 7 You love righteousness and hate wickedness; therefore God, our God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy.***

4. **Psalm 110:1. The LORD says to my lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet."**

The Holy Spirit is presented as God in the Old Testament God

5. ***Psalm 139:7. Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?***

6. ***Isaiah 63:9-10. In all their distress he too was distressed, and the angel of his presence saved them. In his love and mercy he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old. 10 Yet they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit. So he turned and became their enemy and he himself fought against them***

2. Trinity in the New Testament

Trinity is clearly evident in:

1. ***Matthew 28:19-20. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."***

2. ***1 Corinthians 12:4-6. There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. 5 There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. 6 There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.***

3. ***2 Cor 13:14. May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.***

4. ***Rom 8:9-11. You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. [10] But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. [11] And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of[j] his Spirit who lives in you.***

5. ***1 Peter 1:2. ….To God's elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, [2] who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood:***

Jesus, the Son, is fully God. New Testament evidence

1. ***John 1:1. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.***

2. ***Rom 9:5. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of the Messiah, who is God over all, forever praised Amen.***

3. ***Col 2:9. For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.***

4. ***Titus 2:11-13. For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. [12] It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, [13] while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ…***

5. ***John 20:28. Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"***

The Holy Spirit is fully God. New Testament Evidence

1. ***Mark 3:28-29. Truly I tell you, people can be forgiven all their sins and every slander they utter, [29] but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; they are guilty of an eternal sin."***

2. ***2 Cor 3:17-18. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. [18] And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.***

The Trinity is clearly biblical, therefore important. But can we understand it partially / fully / not at all?

Discuss

1. Do we need to understand the Trinity?
2. Does our salvation rest on understanding the roles of the Father, Son and Spirit in the work of saving us?
3. Are there models we might use to help understand the Trinity?

Three essential elements of the Trinity – all required by Scripture (courtesy of Wayne Grudem)

1. God is three persons.
2. Each of the three persons is fully God.
3. There is one God.

1. Do these three criteria contradict? Discuss. Can we reconcile each claim with the others?
2. Can you complete a Rubik's Cube? For most of it when one side is complete it undoes whatever else has been achieved on other sides. Can this be compared to attempting to reconciling the three essential truths of the Trinity?

Some flawed attempts to reduce the Trinity to something our brains can accommodate include:

1. Modalism (Trinity by shiftwork)
    - Father, Son and Spirit all play the part of God at different times but not at the same time.
    - **Can the ice / water / steam analogy be helpful? Discuss**

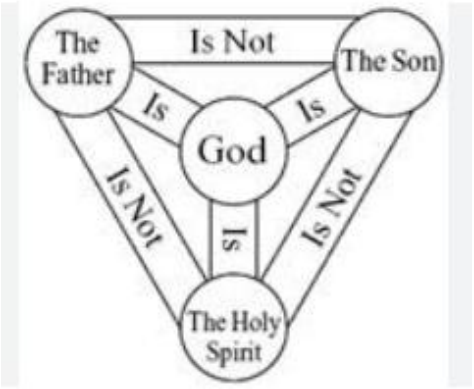
2. Partialism (Trinity by Division)
    - Each is a part of God but it takes all 3 together to make one God
    - **Can the 3-leafed clover analogy be helpful?**

3. Arianism (Airius)
    - The Son of God is not actually God, but was created by God and is less than God.
    - **Have you ever discussed this with a Jehovah's Witness subscriber?**

You might like to watch St Patrick's bad Analogy video clip St Patrick's Bad Analogy Trinity

Is there a way for us to understand the Trinity?

A helpful model? How might this model help correct wrong understandings? Is it adequate?



Discuss how Trinitarianism outworks in our faith-journey?

1. ***The three persons are each equally God but with distinct roles.***
   Equality in value does not require identical roles.
   Discuss what we can learn from this with respect to roles in:
   i. **Marriage**
   ii. **Calling / ministry / function**
   iii. **Spiritual gifts**

2. ***Perfect mutualism is a relational model for us*** through unity in diversity
   Eg submitting to one another – Ephesians 5:21
   How might the perfect relationships of mutual submission in thee Triune Godhead inspire us?

3. ***We can worship fully the triune God whom we can only understand partially.*** **Do we struggle to worship what we cannot fully understand? Discuss. How might we respond?**

4. ***We humbly acknowledge our salvation and our ongoing walk with God are due to the love of the Father, the atonement provided by the Son and the ongoing sanctifying work of the Spirit*** ***Does this inspire and encourage us? Pray for each other.***