**Tenets of the Christian Faith**

**Week 5 – Trinity (John and Gary)**

**Introduction**

In the Doctrine of the Trinity, we encounter one of the truly distinctive doctrines of Christianity. Among the religions of the world, the Christian faith is unique in making the claim that God is one and yet there are three who are God.

The Doctrine of the Trinity can be summed up in one key phrase:

**One God in Three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit**

The Doctrine of the Trinity is defined as: God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit are all God and Lord as three separate and distinct persons of one Trinity. As such, there is ONE God but in three separate and distinct persons of one Trinity: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

The Doctrine of the Trinity is crucial for Christianity. It is concerned with who God is, what He is like, how He works, and how He is to be approached. In addition, the Doctrine of the Deity of Jesus Christ, which we looked at in Week 3, is very much wrapped up with our understanding of the Trinity.

Any denomination that does not preach and teach that Jesus Christ is both God and Lord Himself is not a true branch of Christianity since the doctrine of the Trinity is a basic and fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith.

The position we take on the Trinity will also answer several questions of a practical nature. Whom are we to worship - Father only, Son, Holy Spirit, or Triune God? To whom are we to pray? Is the work of each to be considered in isolation from the others, or may we think of the atoning death of Jesus as somehow the work of the Father as well?

From the Word of God there are three separate but interrelated types of evidence: evidence for the unity of God - that God is one; evidence that there are three persons who are God; and, finally, indications of the three-in-oneness of God.

What is the doctrine of the Trinity? It should be noted that the word Trinity is never given in the Bible; it was originally used by the church father Tertullian (AD 155–220).”i “The word *trinity* means ‘tri-unity’ or ‘three-in-oneness.’ It is used to summarize the teaching of Scripture that God is three persons yet one God.”ii Essentially, the doctrine of the Trinity teaches these three things:

1. There is one God
2. God is three individual persons and each is fully God.
3. God is a unity (three-in-oneness)

The Westminster Confession of Faith (1647) summarizes these statements this way: “In the unity of the God-head there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.”iii

These truths seem to contradict one another. How can there be one God and, yet, three individual persons that are also fully God? It is not something that we necessarily fully understand, but it is something that the Bible teaches. J. I. Packer said this:

The historic formulation of the Trinity...seeks to circumscribe and safeguard this mystery (not explain it; that is beyond us), and it confronts us with perhaps the most difficult thought that the human mind has ever been asked to handle. It is not easy; but it is true.iv

**The Orthodox Formulation of the Trinity**

Although the word “Trinity” does not appear in the Scriptures, the concept of the Trinity is clearly articulated throughout the Word of God as we will see. During the first centuries of the new Christian Church, many heretical ideas were created, especially around the Deity of Christ. By 325 AD, The Christian Faith had become legal in the Roman Empire due to Constantine. In order to clarify this extremely important Theology of the Trinity, Constantine called together all the Bishops of the day at the Council of Nicaea. The outcome was the Nicene Creed on the Trinity: “We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, 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. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.”

Despite its complexity, the Trinity remains one of the most important doctrines in Christianity.

Did you know that Athanasius, an early Christian theologian, was instrumental in coming against false ideas of the Trinity to establish the Scriptural accurate view of the Trinity. He argued against Arianism, which denied the full divinity of Jesus Christ.

Augustine helped shape Western theology by emphasizing the unity and diversity within the Trinity. Thomas Aquinas studied the Trinity in Scripture and his Summa Theologica is still studied today as a key text on Trinitarian doctrine. Karl Barth emphasized God’s self-revelation through scripture and stood for the Word of God being the final authority rather than philosophical speculation.

*Why does all this matter?*

Understanding the Trinity is NOT like an academic exercise without real-world applications – nothing could be further from the truth. Our beliefs about God fundamentally shape how we live our lives and relate to others.

Here are three reasons why grasping this doctrine matters:

1. **Clarity:** Understanding what we mean when we say God helps clarify our thinking around issues related to faith.
2. **Worship**: Knowing more about God allows us to worship Him more fully and authentically and to know Him and Who He is.
3. **Salvation** - Examine five ways that the Trinity relates to salvation
* **Redemption**: Jesus’ death on the cross provides redemption from sin in Ephesians 1:7. This sacrifice was made possible by Jesus submitting to the Father’s will in Matthew 26:39 and empowered by the Holy Spirit who raised Him from death in Romans 8:11.
* **Reconciliation**: Through Christ’s atonement, believers are reconciled with God in 2 Corinthians 5:18-19, which allows them to have a personal relationship with each person of Godhead.
* **Regeneration**: Regeneration is an essential component of salvation as it transforms individuals into new creations in Christ, 2 Corinthians 5:17. It is accomplished by renewing power provided by all three members of Godhead working together, Titus 3:5.
* **Sanctification:** Sanctification is a continuous process where believers grow in holiness after their regeneration. The Triune God enables sanctification. The Father sets apart believers for holy living, 1 Peter 1:16. The Son gives them an example to follow, John 13:15 and the Holy Spirit empowers them to live righteously, Galatians 5:16.
* **Glorification:** Glorification marks our final transformation when we receive eternal life with Christ after physical death or rapture. All three Persons participate in glorifying believers - The Father grants them access to heaven’s kingdom in John 14:2. The Son welcomes them as co-heirs in Romans 8:17 and The Holy Spirit seals believers for redemption’s finalization in Ephesians 1:13-14.

After examining the Scriptures as it pertains to the Trinity, and putting them together as theological construct, the Council of Nicaea (325 CE) and Constantinople (381 CE) established the Trinity as an essential part of the Christian faith based on the Word of God.

Let’s look at the Trinity in more detail.

**One God**

Where do we see the teaching that we have one God? We see it throughout the Old Testament. In fact, this was the teaching that at that time separated Judaism from other religions. Monotheism during ancient times was unique, as most nations accepted many gods.

We see this in Deuteronomy 6:4–5: “*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: and thou shalt*  *love* *the* *LORD* thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.”

The great declaration of the Jewish religion was that God was one Lord, and on that basis, he should be loved with all one’s heart, soul, and might. He was the only one worthy of worship because he was the only God. In fact, we see this reiterated by implication in the Ten Commandments through the prohibition against idols.

“I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.” Exodus 20:2–5

The implication is that God is the only God, and therefore, the Israelites should not worship other gods or make any idols before him. God is one! Furthermore, in Isaiah the Oneness of God is often stated: Isaiah 43:10; 44:6, 8; 45:5, 14, 18, 21,22; 46:9; 47:8.

We also see this teaching throughout the New Testament. James declares this in James 2:19: “You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.”

James says even demons believe in monotheism. Paul similarly teaches this in 1 Corinthians 8:4: “So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: ‘We know that an idol is nothing at all in the world and that there is no God but one.”

Paul teaches that there is only one God and that all other deities or idols are nothing at all. They are false. There is only one God in the world.

The teaching of the entire Scripture is very clear; there is only one God, and therefore, we should not worship any other. And because he is the only God, the Creator, we should love him with all our heart, soul, and might. Nobody else deserves our devotion and the best of our affections except God.

**Three Individual Persons**

Scripture sets forth a distinction of the Father from the Word, and of the Word from the Spirit. Yet the greatness of the mystery warns us how much reverence and sobriety we ought to use in investigating this. “I cannot think of the one without quickly being encircled by the splendor of the three; nor can I discern the three without being straight away carried back to the one.” - Gregory of Nazianzus. These words, “Father,” “Son,” and “Holy Spirit,” imply a real distinction - not just a title, not a division. So much confusion can be cleared up with a proper understanding of this.

Yet, this is not the only thing the Scripture teaches about the Trinity. It also teaches that God is three separate persons. Where do we see this?

We have seen this in every place that speaks of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit as uniquely and fully God. We will consider a few Scriptures that teach this.

The doctrine of the Trinity introduces a unique perspective to monotheism by revealing that God’s nature is expressed in three different persons.

A few key points to keep in mind:

* Each person of the Trinity has a unique role within the Godhead:
* Father as Creator and Sustainer - Genesis 1:1; Psalm 104:10-13.
* Son as Redeemer and Mediator - John 3:16; Hebrews 4:14-15.
* Holy Spirit as Sanctifier and Guide - Romans 8:11; Acts 9:31.
* The essence of the Trinity is not easily comprehended except by the revelation of the Spirit of God. We must accept the doctrine of the Trinity by faith in God and His Word.

Luke 8:10 - “And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.

1 Cor. 2:9 - “But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”

1 Cor. 2:10 - “But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searches all things, yea, the deep things of God.”

Stated differently, God is one in essence and three in person. These definitions express three crucial truths:

(1) the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinct Persons.

(2) each Person is fully God

(3) there is only one God

The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinct Persons:

* Father as God is Philippians 1:2 - “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”
* Jesus as God in Titus 2:13 - "...waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ...”
* Holy Spirit as God in Acts 5: 3-4 - "But Peter said, ‘Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God.’”

The Father sent the Son into the world John 3:16, he cannot be the same person as the Son. Likewise, after the Son returned to the Father in John 16:10, the Father and the Son sent the Holy Spirit into the world in John 14:26; Acts 2:33. Therefore, the Holy Spirit must be distinct from the Father and the Son.

KEY UNDERSTANDING: The Trinity is not belief in three gods. There is only one God, and we must never stray from this.

The three Persons are not each part of God but are each fully God and equally God. Within God’s one undivided being there is an unfolding into three interpersonal relationships such that there are three Persons.

How is God one? He is one in essence. How is God three? He is three in Person. Essence and person are not the same thing. God is one in a certain way (essence) and three in a different way (person). Since God is one in a different way than he is three, the Trinity is not a contradiction. There would only be a contradiction if we said that God is three in the same way that he is one.

The distinctions within the Godhead are not distinctions of his essence and neither are they something added onto his essence, but they are the unfolding of God’s one, undivided being into three interpersonal relationships such that there are three real Persons.

God is not one person who took three consecutive roles. That is the *heresy of modalism which is* the doctrine that the persons of the Trinity represent only three modes or aspects of the divine revelation, not distinct and coexisting persons in the divine nature.

The Father did not become the Son and then the Holy Spirit. Instead, there have always been and always will be three distinct persons in the ETERNAL Godhead.

The fact that God is one in essence but three in person has helped to show why the Trinity is not a contradiction. But how does it show us why there is only one God instead of three? It is very simple: All three Persons are one God because, as we saw above, they are all the same essence.

*Essence means the same thing as being*. Thus, since God is only one essence; he is only one being, not three. This should make it clear why it is so important to understand that all three Persons are the same essence. For if we deny this, we have denied God’s unity and so contend that there is more than one being of God (that there is more than one God). *What does essence mean? It means the same thing as being. God’s essence is his being.* To be even more precise, essence is what he is.

**John 4:24 God is Spirit.** Further, we clearly should not think of God as consisting of anything other than divinity. The substance of God is God. Within God’s one, undivided being is an unfolding into three personal distinctions. These personal distinctions are ways of existence within the divine being but are not divisions of the divine being. They are personal forms of existence other than a difference in being.

In the baptism of Jesus, we see the Father speaking from heaven and the Spirit descending from heaven in the form of a dove as Jesus comes out of the water in Mark 1:10–11 - “And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.” This is the best picture of the three and one nature of the Godhead, all three persons come together in these two verses.

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. This affirms that Jesus is God and, at the same time, that he was with God, thereby indicating that Jesus is a distinct Person from God the Father. John 1:18 - “No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.”

In John 16:13–15 - “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore, said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.”

We see that although there is a close unity between the three persons, the Holy Spirit is also distinct from the Father and the Son.

The fact that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinct *Persons* means, in other words, that the Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is not the Father. Jesus is God, but he is not the Father or the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is God, but he is not the Son or the Father. They are different Persons, not three different ways of looking at God. The *personhood* of each member of the Trinity means that each *Person* has a distinct center of consciousness. Thus, they relate to each other personally — the Father regards himself as *I* while he regards the Son and Holy Spirit as *you*. Likewise, the Son regards himself as *I*, but the Father and the Holy Spirit as *you a*nd the Holy Spirit regards himself as “I” and the Father and Son as “you.”

The Personhood of the Holy Spirit is distinct from the Personhood of the Son and the Father. They are three real persons, not three roles God plays.

While the three members of the Trinity are distinct, this does not mean that any is inferior to the other. Instead, they are all identical in attributes. They are equal in power, love, mercy, justice, holiness, knowledge, and all other qualities.

Getting to know the three distinct persons of God in the Trinity can provide new insights into His character. In exploring these doctrines more deeply, we can come to a greater appreciation of the complexity and beauty of our faith.

**God the Father Is Fully God**

There are a number of different words used to describe God the Father in the Bible. “Elohim” commonly translated as “God” appears 2570 times. YHWH, Yahweh or Jehovah appears 5989 times and is commonly translated as “Lord” or “Lord God.” Jah, the first letter in YHWH, is also used approximately 50 times to describe God. All of these Hebrew words are used to refer to God the Father. There are numerous verses about God, and therefore, there really is no discussion about whether or not God the Father is God. Genesis 1:1 says: “In the beginning God created heaven and earth.” Jesus taught the disciples to pray to God the Father in the Lord’s Prayer (Matt 6:9, Luke 11:2). God the Father is uniquely and fully God.

**Jesus Is Fully God**

We also see throughout the Scriptures that Jesus is God. One of the initial prophecies about Jesus was that he would be called Mighty God. Isaiah 9:6 says this: “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, the *Mighty* *God*, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”

In the book of Titus, Paul called Jesus God as well. He said: “While we wait for the blessed hope, *the* *glorious* *appearing* *of* *our* *great* *God* *and* *Savior,* *Jesus* *Christ*.” - Titus 2:13.

Not only does the Bible teach that Jesus is God, but that he is fully God. He is not fifty percent man and fifty percent God, but one hundred percent God and one hundred percent man, even though we may not be able to fully comprehend how this is possible. Listen to what Colossians 2:9 says about Jesus: “For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.”

Christ is fully God! In addition, Hebrews 1:3 says this:

*“*The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.”

Christ being fully God is an essential doctrine that has been constantly attacked throughout the centuries. Mormons and Jehovah’s Witnesses both teach that Jesus is a created being. Mormons believe he originally was an angel, and Jehovah’s Witnesses see him as only the Son of God, a created being, and not God. In fact, the Council of Nicaea was called by Constantine specifically to address this heresy being led by Arius (called Arianism) that declared that Jesus Christ was a created being and not eternal God. There is nothing new under the sun!

These interpretations do not agree with sound doctrine; the Son of God is fully God. When Jesus was born, it was his humanity that came into being but he has always eternally existed as God. John 1:1 - “In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. John 8:58 - “Verily, verily I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.”

**Jesus Christ is the Son of God**

The belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God is another example of what Christians believe that separates the Christian faith from many of the other false religions. When we don’t believe in Jesus as the Son of God, we are anti-Christ. 1 John 4.2-3 - “By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.” The false religion of Islam states that there is no way that God would ever have any type of begotten Son, but our Bible is clear on this doctrine.

These verses all tell us, without any other possible interpretation, that Jesus Christ is truly the only begotten (unique) Son of God the Father.

John 3:15-18 - “For God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. He who believes in him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”

Luke 1:31 - “And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son and shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Highest.”

1 John 4:14 - “And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in Him, and He in God.”

1 John 5:11-12 - “And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.”

Hebrews 1:1-4 - “God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things.”

John 20:30-31 - “And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.”

If you believe that all the Bible is truly the inspired and infallible Word of God, then the above verses leave no room for any further discussion or any other type of interpretation. Jesus Christ is truly the UNIQUE Son of God the Father, demonstrating that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and it is demonstrated clearly throughout Scripture and confirmed by the Canon of Scripture and the Doctrines of Christian Faith as established by the Nicene Creed.

**The Holy Spirit Is Fully God**

Not only are the Son and Father fully God, but the Holy Spirit is fully God as well. This boggles the mind. However, Scripture clearly declares this reality. Look at Acts 5:3–4 - “Then Peter said, ‘Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that *you* *have* *lied* *to* *the* *Holy* *Spirit* and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? Didn’t it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn’t the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You *have* *not* *lied* *to* *men* *but* *to* *God.’*”

Peter equates lying to the Holy Spirit as lying to God. Similarly, in 1 Corinthians 3:16, Paul calls the church the “temple of God”, and then, he says the Holy Spirit indwells us, equating the Holy Spirit to God. Listen to the text, “Don’t you know that *you* *yourselves* *are* *God’s* *temple* and that *God’s* *Spirit* *lives* *in* *you*?”

Here are several acknowledgements of the person of the Holy Spirit from the Old Testament:

Psalm 51:11–13 - “Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, so that sinners will turn back to you.”

Isaiah 63:10 - “Yet they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit. So, he turned and became their enemy and he himself fought against them.”

Isaiah 48:16 - “Come near me and listen to this: From the first announcement I have not spoken in secret; at the time it happens, I am there. And now the Sovereign Lord has sent me, endowed with his Spirit.”

The Holy Spirit is not an *it*, but a *He.*

John 14:26- “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.” Also see John 16:7–15; Acts 8:16.

The fact that the Holy Spirit is a Person, not an impersonal force (like gravity or energy), is also shown by the following facts. These are all qualities of personhood:

* He speaks, Hebrews 3:7 - “Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, ‘Today, if you hear his voice...’”
* He Reasons, Acts 15:28 - “For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements...”
* He Thinks and understands, 1 Corinthians 2:10–11 - “...these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.”
* He Wills, 1 Corinthians 12:11 - “All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.”
* He Feels, Ephesians 4:30 - “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”
* He Gives personal fellowship, 2 Corinthians 13:14 - “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”

It is very clear that even though the Scripture says that we have only one God, it also says that the Holy Spirit is God, the Father is God, and that Jesus is God.

**Three Distinct Persons**

The Bible also teaches that the three persons of the Godhead are distinct. Look at Matthew 3:15–17, during Jesus’ baptism: Jesus replied, “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.” Then John consented. As soon as *Jesus* *was* *baptized*, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw *the* *Spirit* *of* *God* *descending* like a dove and lighting on him. *And* *a* *voice* *from* *heaven* *said,* *“This* *is* *my* *Son,* *whom* *I* *love;* *with* *him* *I* *am* *well* *pleased.*”

In this verse, we clearly see the Trinity’s distinctness. Jesus comes out of the water from his baptism, the Holy Spirit descends upon him like a dove, and God speaks saying, “This is my Son, whom I love, with him I am well pleased.” Though they are one, we see them clearly operating individually and separately.

*The passages we have demonstrate that God always was and always will be three Persons. There was never a time when one of the Persons of the Godhead did not exist. They are all eternal.* Psalm 90:2; John 1:1, Titus 1:2, Rev 4:11, Rom 1:20, John 17:5, Rev 21:6, 1 Tim 1:17, Gen 1:2, Rev 3:14, Jude 1:25, Heb. 1:10, 1 Cor 8:6, John 10:30, Isaiah 57:15

The Trinity underscores Christianity’s emphasis on *faith* rather than mere *human reason or logic.*

* The Triune God reveals himself through creation as CREATOR.
* The Triune God redeems humanity through Christ as SAVIOR.
* The Triune God empowers believers through His Holy Spirit as COMFORTER/ADVOCATE.

In summary, belief in the Trinity is central to Christian worship and your relationship with God. This doctrine reinforces knowing God’s nature as expressed in three distinct roles for each person within the Trinity. The more we grow to understand each role within the Trinity, the more we can appreciate how the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit work together towards humanity’s redemption.

In addition to understanding these roles, it’s important to recognize that they are distinct yet inseparable. Each person within the Trinity works together harmoniously towards a common goal: BRINGING GLORY TO GOD THROUGH REDEMPTION.

To further understand the Trinity, let us examine these key aspects:

* **Unity:** Despite being composed of different persons, each member shares a common nature.
* **Equality:** Each person within the Godhead is co-eternal and possesses divine attributes.
* **Distinctiveness:** The Father is not the Son; neither is He the Holy Spirit. Likewise for all members.
* **Interconnectedness:** They work together seamlessly and harmoniously, fulfilling their unique roles in creation without conflict or rivalry.
* **Revelation:** Our knowledge about this doctrine comes from Scripture alone and we must have the eyes of understanding enlightened by the Holy Spirit to even begin to grasp this most important Doctrine of the Faith.

This is also an important doctrine of the Trinity to understand for there are many false teachings concerning it. One such false teaching is called modalism. Instead of God being three distinct persons that are unified, God is seen as being one person showing up or revealing himself in different modes or aspects. In the Old Testament, God revealed himself as God the Father. In the Gospels, God revealed himself as Jesus. In the book of Acts till now, God has revealed himself through the Spirit. It would be similar to me saying I am a husband at home, a pastor at church, and a professor in the classroom. I am the same person, but I wear three different hats. Modalism can also be seen when some people try to describe the Trinity as water in its three different states; solid, liquid and gas. The Trinity is not one being in three different states, modes or aspects; the Trinity is One Essence with three different Persons. This may seem like splitting hairs to some but the importance of getting this correct can not be understated! It is the misunderstanding of the Trinity that leads to all kinds of false teachings and heresy, mostly attacking the divinity of Jesus Christ. We will see more on this in Week 12!

These Scriptures make show the differentiation between the three persons of the Trinity:

Matthew 28:19 - “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.”

Luke 3:22 - “And the Holy Spirit descended upon Him [Jesus] in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, You are My [the Father’s] beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased.”

John 14:26 - “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My [Jesus] name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.”

Acts 2:33 - “Therefore, having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He [Jesus] has poured forth this which you both see and hear.”

Acts 10:38 - “You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.”

Romans 1:4 - “Who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Romans 8:9 - “However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.”

1 Corinthians 6:11 - “Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.”

**Each Person is Fully God**

If God is three Persons, does this mean that each Person is one third of God? NO

Does the Trinity mean that God is divided into three parts? NO

The doctrine of the Trinity does not divide God into three parts. The Bible is clear that all three Persons are each one-hundred-percent God. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are each fully God. Colossians 2:9 says of Christ, in him all the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form. We should not think of God as a pie cut into three pieces, each piece representing a Person. This would make each Person less than fully God and thus not God at all. The divine essence is not something that is divided between the three persons but is fully in all three persons without being divided into parts. The Son is not one-third of the being of God; he is all of the being of God. The Father is not one-third of the being of God; he is all of the being of God. And likewise with the Holy Spirit.

There is only one God. If each Person of the Trinity is distinct and yet fully God, then should we conclude that there is more than one God? Obviously, we cannot, for Scripture is clear that there is only one God. Isaiah 45:21–22 - “There is no other God besides me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none besides me. Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other.” Other scriptures: Isaiah 44:6–8; Exodus 15:11; Deuteronomy 4:35; 6:4–5; 32:39; 1 Samuel 2:2, 1 Kings 8:60.

Having seen that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are distinct Persons, that they are each fully God, and that there is nonetheless only one God, we must conclude that all three Persons are the same God. In other words, there is one God who exists as three distinct Persons.

If there is one passage which most clearly brings all of this together:

**The Great Commision**

Matthew 28:19 - “Make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.”

First, notice that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are distinguished as distinct Persons. We baptize in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Second, notice that each Person must be deity because they are all placed on the same level. In fact, would Jesus have us baptize in the name of a mere creature? Surely not. Therefore, each of the Persons into whose name we are to be baptized must be Deity.

Third, notice that although the three divine Persons are distinct, we are baptized into their name (singular), not names (plural). The three Persons are distinct, yet only constitute one name. This can only be if they share one essence.

**Defining the Three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit**

We can acknowledge that understanding the roles of each person within the Godhead is essential in comprehending how they are distinct from one another.

Having explored the historical origins of the doctrine of the Trinity, it is now important to understand who exactly these three persons are: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These three entities make up the one God that we believe in.

To fully grasp what each person *represents* within the Trinity, here are key points:

* The Father represents the source or originator of all things: Creator, Loving, and Just.
* The Son represents Jesus Christ and is both fully divine and human: Redeemer and Savior.
* The Holy Spirit represents God’s presence on earth and works alongside believers in their daily lives: Comforter, Advocate, and Guide.
* Each person of the Trinity is equal in power and importance.
* Although they exist as separate entities, they work together in perfect harmony.

**Unity of God**

We have seen that we have only one God and that this God manifests himself in three unique and separate persons: Jesus the Son, the Holy Spirit, and God the Father. We also see clear teaching that they are unified, that they are three in one. This is especially important in order to protect us from the false understanding of the Trinity called tritheism. Tritheism does not err in teaching the independence and distinct nature of the Godhead. It errs in teaching that there is no unity at all. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are three distinct powerful gods that are not unified. This is very similar to some pagan conceptions of the Trinity such as the Hindu Trimurti. However, Scripture clearly contradicts this. We have one God that is three separate persons that are fully God and are yet somehow unified. How do we see this throughout the Scripture?

**Unity in the New Testament**

John 10:29-30 says this: “My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand. *I* *and* *the* *Father* *are* *one*.”

Christ clearly declares to his disciples that he and the Father are one. Similarly, John 14:9–10 says this:

Jesus answered: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? *Anyone* *who* *has* *seen* *me* *has* *seen* *the* *Father*. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Don’t you believe *that* *I* *am* *in* *the* *Father,* *and* *that* *the* *Father* *is* *in* *me*? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.” Jesus said to Philip, “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” (v. 9). Christ was in the Father and the Father was in him. There is unity within the Godhead. They are separate and distinct, and they are also unified.

How else do we see this unity in Scripture?

**Close Relationship**

We also see evidence for their unity in how they are often closely put together in many of the blessings or descriptions given in the epistles. We see this often in the writings of Paul. In 2 Corinthians 13:14, he says this: “May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” In this passage, Jesus, God, and the Holy Spirit are associated with one another and seen ministering with one another. Jesus gives grace, God gives love, and the Holy Spirit brings fellowship. This hints at the unity of their relationship in the Trinity.

We see this also with Peter’s greeting in 1 Peter 1:1–2: “To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood…” God knows every believer intimately through his foreknowledge, the Spirit sanctifies believers by making them holy, and Christ cleanses them through his blood. Their close ministry together also points to their unity.

Where else do we see this unity?

**Unity in Works**

We see this unity in statements that declare that Jesus, God, and the Holy Spirit are doing the same works. We will consider several examples of this:

**Creation**

Scripture teaches that God the Father created the earth: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” - Genesis 1:1. The scriptures also teach that Christ created all things. Listen to this: “*For* *by* *him* *all* *things* *were* *created*: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; *all* *things* *were* *created* *by* *him* and for him.” - Colossians 1:16.

John says the same thing: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. *All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made*. - John 1:1-3. Not only do we see the distinctness of Christ as he was “with God,” we also see the unity as he “was God” and made all things. God made all things, and yet, Christ made all things. Christ, the Word, is the Creator.

Similarly, the Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit was a part of the creation process, especially in the creation of humanity. We see the Holy Spirit’s involvement from the very beginning of creation as it speaks of him “hovering over the waters” - Gen 1:2. We also can discern his involvement as God breathed the breath of life into man’s lifeless body - Gen 2:7. The word for *breath* (*ruach*)in the Hebrew can also be translated *Spirit*. The Spirit was involved in creation. We see further evidence of this in how wisdom literature speaks of the Spirit’s current work in creating. Job 33:4 says; “The Spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty gives me life.” Job claims that the Spirit of God created him. This would mean that not only was the Spirit involved in the initial creation of man, but also that the Spirit is necessary for the creation of every human today.

The Psalmist said the same thing about the creatures of the earth, “When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth” - Psalm 104:30.

How can God and Jesus have created all things, and yet, as Job said, the Spirit of God created him and David said the Holy Spirit creates animals? This can only be true if they are unified, if they are all equally God.

**Dwelling in Our Hearts**

We also see the same works ascribed to them in their indwelling of the hearts of believers. The Holy Spirit, the Father, and the Son are said to indwell the hearts of believers. Look at these verses: “Do you not know *that* *your* *body* *is* a *temple* *of* *the* *Holy* *Spirit*, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own” - 1 Corinthians 6:19.

Paul calls believers the temple of the Holy Spirit in 1 Corinthians 6:19, but in 1 Corinthians 3:16, he calls them the temple of God. “Don’t you know that you yourselves *are* *God’s* *temple* and that God’s Spirit lives in you?” - 1 Corinthians 3:16). God the Father and God the Holy Spirit both indwell the believer.

In Ephesians 3:16–17, we also see the Bible teaching that Christ indwells believers. “I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, *so* *that* *Christ* *may* *dwell* *in* *your* *hearts* through faith.”

What other works do we see shared amongst the Godhead?

**Protecting Salvation**

We see all three persons working to keep the salvation of the believer. Listen to this text:

“I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.” - .John 10:28–30

We see here that Jesus has the believers in his hand in order to keep them from perishing (v. 28). But God also has the believers in his hand as well for the same purpose (v. 29). Jesus then declares this is possible because they are one (v. 30).

We also see the Holy Spirit working to keep the salvation of believers. “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom *you* *were* *sealed* *for* *the* *day* *of* *redemption.*” - Ephesians 4:30. The Holy Spirit seals every believer until the day of redemption. He is protecting them so they will not be lost and eternally condemned. We are in God’s hand, Jesus’ hand, and also in the grip of the Holy Spirit.

And one of the best examples of the relationship between God the Father and the Son as it pertains to our salvation from Jesus’ High Priestly prayer in John 17:20-26 - “I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. 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. O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.”

**Unity in the Old Testament**

Do we also see the unity of God in the Old Testament? Are there any ways that we see the doctrine of the Trinity? In the Old Testament, the doctrine of the Trinity is never clearly taught, but there are many passages that suggest or imply Trinitarian doctrine. What are these passages?

**Plurality in Hebrew Words for God**

As mentioned before, we may see an implication of the Trinity in the name Elohim. Elohim, which can be translated as God, is a plural noun that is typically used with a singular verb. Genesis 1:1 says, “In the beginning *God* *created* the heavens and the earth.” Here, God (Elohim) is plural while the word created (bara) is singular, representing both God’s plurality and oneness. Similarly, the Hebrew word “Adonai” (Lord) is also a plural noun that receives a singular verb. The Hebrew God is plural yet singular, as shown in the use of the names Elohim and Adonai.

**Plurality in the Creation of Mankind**

It should also be noted that when God made mankind, he did not make one human. He made two, which says something about God since man was made in his “image”. The image of God is seen in a plurality. Genesis 1:27 says this: “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; *male* *and* *female* *he* *created* *them”* (emphasis mine).

When he says, “in the image of God he created him”, “him” is referring to man as a collective (mankind). He then describes how he created mankind as both “male and female.” We may see the plural nature of God hidden in the fact that he made mankind, “male and female.”

The singularity of the plural God may also be discerned in that the male and female would come together and be “one flesh,” a plural becoming singular. Listen to Genesis 2:24, “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become *one* *flesh*” (emphasis mine).

What other ways is the Trinity implied in the Old Testament?

**Plurality in the Plural Pronouns**

We also see an implication of the Trinity in the plural pronouns used for God. Genesis 1:26 says this:

Then God said, “Let *us* make man in *our* image, in *our* likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground. God says, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness.” Who could he be referring to when he says “us” and “our”?

It does not seem to be referring to angels, as Scripture never clearly teaches that angels are made in the image of God. It must be himself that God is referring to by the plural pronouns. In the beginning there was a conversation amongst the members of the God-head about the creation of man.

This plural language is also seen in other sections of Scripture. Genesis 11:5–7 says:

But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower that the men were building. 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. Come, *let* *us* *go* *down* and confuse their language so they will not understand each other.

When God came down to the tower of Babel and confused the language of the people, he again referred to himself in plurality. “Let us go down and confuse their language.” It doesn’t say the Lord came down with his angels. It only says “the Lord” came down and said, “Let us.”

We see this also in Isaiah 6:8. It says, “Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “*Whom* *shall* *I* *send?* *And* *who* *will* *go* *for* *us?”* And I said, “Here am I. Send me!”

Right before commissioning Isaiah to prophesy to the nation of Israel, God refers to himself first in singular, “Whom shall *I* send” and then in plural “And who will go for *us*?”. Again this is probably an implication of the Trinity; God’s plurality, and yet, oneness.

**God Distinguished from God in Passages**

There are also passages in the Old Testament where one person is called God or Lord, and yet, distinguished from another person called God or Lord in the same scenario. This shows the distinctness of the individual persons in the Godhead. Psalm 110:1 says this, “*The* *LORD* *says* *to* *my* *Lord*: “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.”

Psalm 110:1 has Messianic expectations. The Jews believed that David, who was the author of this passage, was talking about a conversation between God (LORD) and the Messiah (Lord). God told the Messiah to come and sit at his right hand till all his enemies were made a “footstool” for his feet. But what is interesting is that David calls them both, Lord. Jesus uses this passage to try to help the Pharisees recognize that the Messiah would also be God. Consider their discussion in Matthew 22:41–46:

“ While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, “What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?” “The son of David,” they replied. He said to them, “How is it then that David, speaking by the Spirit, calls him ‘Lord’? For he says, “‘The Lord said to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.”‘ If then David calls him ‘Lord,’ how can he be his son?” No one could say a word in reply, and from that day on no one dared to ask him any more questions.”

It is clear from this text that David believed in the plurality of God. He declared that not only was God, LORD (Yahweh), but the Messiah was also Lord (Adonai). A father or grandfather in the Hebrew context would never call a son, ‘Lord’. It was a patriarchal culture, and therefore, that would never happen. David, the grandfather of the coming messiah, only did this because he believed that the Messiah was God and at the same time separate from God. The Pharisees could not explain this, and it is impossible for a Jewish person to explain it today unless he or she recognizes the plurality of God (cf. Isaiah 9:6).

We see the same thing happen in Malachi. The Lord God refers to the coming messiah as Lord. Malachi 3:1 says this, ‘“See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly *the* *Lord* *you* *are* *seeking* *will* *come* *to* *his* *temple*; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,” *says* *the* *LORD* *Almighty*.” Yahweh (the LORD) distinguishes himself from the Messiah in this passage by saying the “Lord” is coming to his temple. Malachi prophesied that the Messiah was God but, at the same time, distinct from God. There are many implications of the Trinity in the Old Testament, even though they are not explicitly explained.

Therefore, the Bible teaches that there is only “one” God, but also teaches that God is three distinct persons. It also clearly teaches that these three distinct persons are a unity (three-in-oneness). Scripture teaches Trinitarian doctrine.

**Roles in the Trinity**

Another aspect of Trinitarian doctrine is the fact that there are roles within the Trinity. This is even implied by the familial names in the Godhead. God is called God the Father (Matt 6:9) and Jesus is called God the Son (1 John 4:15). Scripture teaches that a son should submit to his father (Colossians 3:20), and this happens in the Godhead as well. This submission is clearly seen throughout Scripture. John 3:16 says: “*For* *God* *so* *loved* *the* *world* *that* *he* *gave* *his* *one* *and* *only* *Son*, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” God sends his Son into the world, and the Son obeys.

We also see Christ’s submission to the Father. Christ said this, “For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me” (John 6:38). He obeys the father throughout his life and gives his life in obedience to him. Listen to Christ’s prayer to the Father right before his crucifixion: “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done” - Luke 22:42.

We even see that Christ’s purpose in redemption is to bring glory to Father eternally. 1 Corinthians 15:24–28 says:

*“Then* *the* *end* *will* *come,* *when* *he* *hands* *over* *the* *kingdom* *to* *God* *the* *Father* after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For he “has put everything under his feet.” Now when it says that “everything” has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. When he has done this, then the *Son* *himself* *will* *be made under him, so that God may be all in all.”*

Finally, Scripture teaches that the Holy Spirit submits both to the Father (John 14:26) and to the Son (John 16:7, 15:26). Jesus told the disciples I will send you the Holy Spirit and also that the Father would send him. John 14:26 says: “But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, *whom* *the* *Father* *will* *send* *in* *my* *name*, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”

John 15:26 says: “When the Counselor comes, *whom* *I* *will* *send* *to* *you* *from* *the* *Father*, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me.”

There is perfect submission in the Godhead. Jesus obeys and submits to the Father and seeks to bring glory to him (cf. John 17:4). The Holy Spirit seeks to bring glory to both the Son and to the Father (cf. John 16:14, 1 Cor 2:12). There is a perfect unity in their oneness.

It should also be added that there is perfect love in the Trinity. 1 John 4:8 says this: “Whoever does not love does not know God, *because* *God* *is* *love.”*

What did God do before the creation of man and angels? He lived in a perfect loving relationship with God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. And in this perfect loving relationship, there was submission and authority.

It is, therefore, no surprise that human relationships, which are meant to reflect the image of God, are built both on love and submission. Children love their parents and submit to their authority (cf. Eph 6:1). Wives love their husbands and also submit to them (cf. Eph 5:22). All human relationships should be built on love and submission as seen in the Godhead. It is when there is a lack of love or a lack of submission that human relationships fall apart. This is true of the husband and wife relationship, the child and parent relationship, and also in work relationships.

We were made in the image of God, and therefore, we are called to reflect both love and submission.

**Importance of the Doctrine of the Trinity**

Why is the doctrine of the Trinity important? Wayne Grudem gives six reasons.

First, the atonement is at stake. If Jesus is merely a created being, and not fully God, then it is hard to see how he, a creature, could bear the full wrath of God against all of our sins. Could any creature, no matter how great, really save us?

Second, justification by faith alone is threatened if we deny the full deity of the Son. (This is seen today in the teaching of the Jehovah’s Witnesses, who do not believe in justification by faith alone.) If Jesus is not fully God, we would rightly doubt whether we can really trust him to save us completely. Could we really depend on any creature fully for our salvation?

Third, if Jesus is not infinite God, should we pray to him or worship him? Who but an infinite, omniscient God could hear and respond to all the prayers of all God’s people? And who but God himself is worthy of worship? Indeed, if Jesus is merely a creature, no matter how great, it would be idolatry to worship him—yet the New Testament commands us to do so (Phil. 2:9–11; Rev. 5:12–14).

Fourth, if someone teaches that Christ was a created being but nonetheless one who saved us, then this teaching wrongly begins to attribute credit for salvation to a creature and not to God himself. But this wrongfully exalts the creature rather than the Creator, something Scripture never allows us to do.

Fifth, the independence and personal nature of God are at stake: If there is no Trinity, then there were no interpersonal relationships within the being of God before creation, and, without personal relationships, it is difficult to see how God could be genuinely personal or be without the need for a creation to relate to.

Sixth, the unity of the universe is at stake: If there is not perfect plurality and perfect unity in God himself, then we have no basis for thinking there can be any ultimate unity among the diverse elements of the universe either. Clearly, in the doctrine of the Trinity, the heart of the Christian faith is at stake. Herman Bavinck says that “Athanasius understood better than any of his contemporaries that Christianity stands or falls with the confession of the deity of Christ and of the Trinity.” He adds, “In the confession of the Trinity throbs the heart of the Christian religion: every error results from, or upon deeper reflection may be traced to, a wrong view of this doctrine.”v

Certainly, we can see why this is such an important doctrine—one worth teaching and defending.

**Heretical and Pagan Views of the Trinity**

To summarize, there are several heresies that have arisen over the years attacking the Doctrine of the Trinity:

1. **Modalism (also known as Sabellianism or Modalistic Monarchianism)**: This heresy denies the distinction of persons within the Godhead and posits that God manifests Himself in different "modes" or roles at different times. According to Modalism, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not distinct persons but different manifestations or aspects of God.

2. **Arianism:** Arianism denies the full divinity of Jesus Christ. It argues that Jesus, while an exalted being, is subordinate to God the Father and therefore not fully equal to Him. Arians believe that Jesus is a creation of the Father and not co-eternal or of the same substance (homoousios) as the Father.

3. **Adoptionism:** This heresy suggests that Jesus, at a certain point, was adopted as the Son of God. It denies the pre-existence and eternal divinity of Jesus Christ and asserts that Jesus became the Son of God through adoption or infusion of divine grace.

4. **Subordinationism:** Subordinationism is the belief that the Son and the Holy Spirit are subordinate to the Father in their essence and nature. It suggests a hierarchical relationship within the Trinity, where the Son and the Holy Spirit are seen as lesser or subordinate beings to the Father.

5. **Partialism:** Partialism is the belief that each person of the Trinity represents only a part or aspect of God. It misconstrues the doctrine of the Trinity by separating the persons to such an extent that they lose their unity and become distinct parts rather than a harmonious whole.

In addition to these heresies within the church and Christian faith, there are examples of the pagan versions of the Trinity that we should be aware of:

**The Hindu “Trimurti**” - The Hindu Trimurti is a concept that represents the divine aspects of the supreme reality in Hinduism. It consists of three major deities: Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. Each of these deities plays a unique role and represents different aspects of the cosmic order. Brahma is considered the creator within the Trimurti. Vishnu, the preserver, is perhaps the most beloved and worshipped deity in Hinduism. He is associated with the preservation and maintenance of the universe. Vishnu is believed to have incarnated on Earth multiple times in different forms known as avatars, such as Rama and Krishna, to restore balance and protect dharma (cosmic order). Shiva, the destroyer, is the third member of the Trimurti. He/She represents the aspect of dissolution and transformation.

While the Trimurti represents the three major aspects of divinity, it is essential to understand that these deities are not considered separate or independent entities. Instead, they are understood as manifestations of the same divine reality, known as Brahman. This concept reflects the Hindu belief in the ultimate oneness and unity of all existence.

**Pantheistic Monism** - It is important not to underestimate the impact of the Hindu belief system on our modern Western society. It has become mainstream in America through practices such as yoga and meditation and proliferated through the medium of music, especially by bands like the Beatles and Rolling Stones and is the backbone of the New Age Movement. Many of the ideologies and teachings of Hinduism have infiltrated the Christian church. At its core, Hinduism teaches “Pantheistic Monism,” the belief that God (Brahman) is everything and everything is God and therefore all is one. As we saw above, the belief in the Trimurti is core to this belief system but the Trimurti is not in any way like the Trinity. Although the Trinity interacts with creation, we cannot say that all of creation IS the Trinity. True Christians believe that the Trinity is the only Eternal, non-created self-existent and all else has been created by God the Trinity.

**Christ Consciousness -** Related to Pantheistic Monism is the concept of Christ Consciousness, a fundamental tenet of the New Age Movement. This concept believes that Jesus was a normal man like all of us who was enlightened and became the “Christ.” They use the baptism of Jesus when the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus in the form of a dove as the moment when Jesus became the Christ by receiving “Christ Consciousness.” According to their belief this so-called “Christ Consciousness” is within all humans as all humanity is “divine” and it only needs to be woken up through the process of enlightenment, which is what Jesus went through. Furthermore, it was his mission on earth to show us how to become enlightened and received “Christ Consciousness.” Eventually, all of humanity will become enlightened at which time we will evolve or ascend to a higher level of being and become “gods” or “ascended Masters” for the next group of human-like beings going through the process “evolutionary enlightenment” and “ascension.”

**The Mystery School Teach of the Father, Mother and Child** - This is a pagan form of the Trinity that is very common, especially in the ancient religions and belief system of the middle east. The original version of this corrupted trinity can be found at the time of Nimrod, the architect of the tower of Babel and the original creator of the Mystery School tradition. Nimrod’s wife was Semiramis and his son was Tammuz. Tammuz became a fertility god who was murdered by demons and resurrected every year in spring. We even see a reference to Tammuz in Ezekiel 8:14 - “Then he brought me to the entrance of the gate to the Lord’s Temple, which faced the north. That’s where I saw women seated, weeping for Tammuz.” This same belief in the Father, Mother and Son can also be seen in the Egyptian religion as Osiris, Isis and Horus. This cult of the pagan trinity is alive and well today, especially in such groups as the Freemasons and can even be seen in our Nation’s capital most clearly in the Washington monument, which is an Egyptian obelisk, the ultimate symbol of the pagan trinity.

**Islam -** Islam highly venerates Jesus as a prophet of Allah and even teach the Virgen birth but they despise the belief in the Trinity and claim it is polytheism:

Surah 4:171 - “O People of the Book! Do not go to extremes regarding your faith; say nothing about Allah except the truth. The Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, was no more than a messenger of Allah and the fulfilment of His Word through Mary and a spirit ˹created by a command˺ from Him. ... do not say, ‘Trinity.’ Stop!—for your own good. Allah is only One God. Glory be to Him! He is far above having a son! To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. And Allah is sufficient as a Trustee of Affairs.”

Surah 5:72,73, 75 - “Those who say, “Allah is the Messiah, son of Mary,” have certainly fallen into disbelief. The Messiah ˹himself˺ said, “O Children of Israel! Worship Allah—my Lord and your Lord.” Whoever associates others with Allah ˹in worship˺ will surely be forbidden Paradise by Allah. Their home will be the Fire. And the wrongdoers will have no helpers. Those who say, “Allah is one in a Trinity,” have certainly fallen into disbelief. There is only One God. If they do not stop saying this, those who disbelieve among them will be afflicted with a painful punishment. The Messiah, son of Mary, was no more than a messenger. ˹Many˺ messengers had ˹come and˺ gone before him. His mother was a woman of truth. They both ate food. See how We make the signs clear to them, yet see how they are deluded ˹from the truth˺! - 5:116 And ˹on Judgment Day˺ Allah will say, “O Jesus, son of Mary! Did you ever ask the people to worship you and your mother as gods besides Allah?” He will answer, “Glory be to You! How could I ever say what I had no right to say? If I had said such a thing, you would have certainly known it. You know what is ˹hidden˺ within me, but I do not know what is within You. Indeed, You ˹alone˺ are the Knower of all unseen.”

Surah 19:88-93 - “They say, ‘The Most Compassionate has offspring.’ You have certainly made an outrageous claim, by which the heavens are about to burst, the earth to split apart, and the mountains to crumble to pieces in protest of attributing children to the Most Compassionate. It does not befit ˹the majesty of˺ the Most Compassionate to have children. There is none in the heavens or the earth who will not return to the Most Compassionate in full submission.”

Surah 19:88-93 - “Allah has never had ˹any˺ offspring, nor is there any god besides Him. Otherwise, each god would have taken away what he created, and they would have tried to dominate one another. Glorified is Allah above what they claim!”

Surah 23:91 - “Say, ˹O Prophet,˺ “He is Allah—One ˹and Indivisible˺; Allah—the Sustainer ˹needed by all˺. He has never had offspring, nor was He born. And there is none comparable to Him.”

**Applications**

What are applications one can take from the doctrine of the Trinity?

**1. The Trinity reminds us of why we should not make any idols of God.**

There is nothing in the world like the God of the Bible. There is nothing that can accurately demonstrate the doctrine of the Trinity. It is a paradox. How can we make an idol of something that cannot be fully comprehended or demonstrated? There is nothing like the God of Scripture. He is the one and only God, and therefore, he deserves all our love and worship.

**2. The Trinity reminds us of our need for community.**

If God is a Trinity that has forever lived in communion, and humans are made in his image, how much more do we need continual fellowship? When God made man he did not make him to be alone; he made two which would become “one flesh.” Man was never meant to be independent. We need friends, family, church members, etc., for we were meant to grow and develop in community. This comes from being made in the image of God.

**3. The Trinity reminds us of the order that should be seen in human relationships.**

There is order in the Trinitarian relationship. The Son submits to the Father, the Spirit submits to both the Son and the Father, and all this is done in love (1 John 4:8). Therefore, we see the need for this order in our human relationships. We see this order in various ways.

This order is seen in citizens submitting to the government and its officials. Romans 13:1 says:

Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.

This order is seen in employees submitting to employers. Colossians 3:22 says, “Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord.”

This order is also seen in congregants submitting to the leadership of the church. Hebrews 13:17 says:

Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.

This order is seen in children obeying their parents. Colossians 3:20 says, “Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.”

This order is seen in wives submitting to their husbands. “Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord” (Colossians 3:18).

In fact, Paul uses the authority in the God-head as a reflection of the roles between a husband and wife. First Corinthians 11:3 says this: “Now I want you to realize that *the* *head* *of* *every* *man* *is* *Christ*, and the *head* *of* *the* *woman* *is* *man*, and *the* *head* *of* *Christ* *is* *God*” (emphasis mine).

It should be noted that the word “woman” should probably be translated “wife”. Women are not called to submit to every man, but only to their husbands (Col 3:18). Paul teaches the husband’s headship over the wife by comparing the husband to God and the wife to Christ. The wife is meant to submit to her husband in the same way that Christ submits to God.

Now, this may sound chauvinist and sexist and some have declared it so. However, it is not chauvinist or sexist because God created the sexes, and he made the husband and wife relationship to reflect the order in the Trinity. Christ is not less than God the Father. They are coequal, but there is order in their relationship. In the same way, the husband and wife are coequal, but there is order in their relationship as it reflects the image of God.

As we consider all these areas of authority given by God, which reflect the Trinity, it also must be remembered that all these relationships must be centered in love (1 John 4:8). Submission in the Godhead happens in a loving relationship. It should be the same for citizens and government officials, employees and employers, church members and leadership, children and parents, and husbands and wives. Without love and submission, society will fall apart.

What else does the Trinity teach us?

**4. The Trinity reminds us that the authorship of Scripture is divine.**

Paradoxical doctrines in the Bible, such as the Trinity, are a form of evidence for its divine origin. Man would never make up doctrines such as this. They would make up doctrines one could fully understand and comprehend; however, the Bible is full of paradoxes.

How can Jesus be one hundred percent God and one hundred percent man? That doesn’t make any sense. How can God be in control of everything, yet man still have free-will? How can God be three in one? These are mysteries.

However, they make perfect sense if the Bible has been written by an infinite God. A finite mind could never fully comprehend something “infinite” such as God. Therefore, if Scripture is truly divine, then one should expect to find such mysteries as the Trinity in it. We should expect to not “fully comprehend” an infinite God.

1 Mark Driscoll; Gerry Breshears. Doctrine: What Christians Should Believe. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway. 2010), 12.

2 Wayne A. Grudem. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House, 2004), 226.

3 Mark Driscoll; Gerry Breshears. *Doctrine: What Christians Should Believe*. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway. 2010), 12.

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5 Wayne A. Grudem. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House, 2004), 247-248.