

**Intro:** We come to a new section in our look at the doctrines of our faith – The doctrines of God

## 1. It is essential that our thoughts about God are accurate

- A. Get off here and you'll be off everywhere in your Christianity – every doctrine will be skewed
- B. Problem: many have a custom designed God – Not God of Scripture but one of their own imagination
  - 1). You hear all the time things like “My God would never send anybody to hell”
    - a). All I can say is – you are right! That is YOUR God! Not the God of the Bible

That is a God you made up! That is making God into what you want Him to be!

**Thought:** But this is a great problem today – people have redefined what God is like

- A. They want a God that thinks like they do – accepts what they accept – rejects what they reject

**Common in religion:** In Kyoto, Japan, is an unusual place of worship called "The Temple of the Thousand Buddhas." On display inside the shrine are more than a thousand likenesses of Buddha, each just a little different from the others. They are there so the devotee can come in, find the one that looks the most like himself, and worship it.

- 1). Before you're too hard on those Buddhists God says man does the same thing with Him

**His words to Israel: Psa 50:21 (NASB) ...*You thought that I was just like you...***

- B. This is idolatry – an image we've created that is the God we want Him to be

- 1). Rather than us conforming ourselves to Him
  - Loving what He loves and hating what He hates
  - It is the opposite – He loves what we love and hates what we hate
- 2). We take the magnificence of God and reduce Him down to what we want
  - a). We end up with an image of God that is nothing like the true God of the Bible

**Thought:** That is why we must go to the Bible where God has revealed to us who He is

- A. We don't have to guess at what He's like – that's good because we'd never guess accurately

**Is 55:8–9 (ESV)** For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. <sup>(9)</sup> For *as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

- 1). Because of man's inability to think like God does – God stooped down and revealed Himself
  - a). Through the Words of Scripture
  - b). Then painted a picture of what He is like through the life of Christ

- B. We must not formulate our understanding of God from our own imagination/thinking

- 1). We will ALWAYS get it wrong
- 2). Therefore we dear not go to any other source to get that understanding but the Bible
  - a). In it God has given us everything we need to know about Him

## I. INTRODUCTORY THOUGHTS ON THE DOCTRINES OF GOD

### 1. What we will not cover: Trying to prove the existence of God

- A. We may do that later in a class on apologetics but won't get bogged down with that now
- B. We will assume what the Bible assumes – that the existence of God is obvious
  - 1). The Bible simply states “In the beginning God...” and leaves it at that

**Transition:** That is what we will not cover – let's look at a difficulty we must accept in what we do cover

- A. There is an issue the theologians call the “incomprehensibility of God” = long word – simple meaning

### The Incomprehensibility of God

#### 1. This stems from the vast difference between who we are and who God is

- A. He is infinite we are finite

- B. He has no limitations in any of His attributes - we have many

**Point:** Therefore we must accept that we will never fully understand who He is

- A. Our mind simply cannot grasp something or somebody that cannot be measured in any way
- 1). Everything about Him is perfect and without limit - all knowing – all powerful – eternal
  - 2). Eventually the circuit in our mind flips – we can go no further

## 2. This doesn't mean we can't know anything about God

- A. It simply means we cannot know everything about God
- 1). The enormity of His being goes beyond our limited ability to understand
- B. Aren't you glad – if our pea brains could fully grasp Him – He's a God who is too small

**Thought:** What we can know is fantastic! Breath taking! Even though it is limited

- A. We can know and understand – to a degree - how glorious He is – can't wait until that is maxed out  
We can understand all we need to know to respond to Him in a saving way  
We understand enough about Him that we can enter into intimate fellowship with Him
- B. But we also realize - at the deepest level of our understanding – just scratching the surface

**1 Co 13:12 (ESV)** For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face...

- 1). But even this dim view is so amazing – it makes me long for more

**Paul felt this way: 2 Cor 5:1-2 (NLT)** For we know that when this earthly tent we live in is taken down--when we die and leave these bodies--we will have a home in heaven, an eternal body made for us by God himself and not by human hands. (2) *We grow weary in our present bodies, and we long for the day when we will put on our heavenly bodies like new clothing.*

- a). Paul knew Christ intimately and that just made him want to be with Him – maxed out

**Php 1:21 (ESV)** For to me to live is Christ, *and to die is gain.*

- 1a). What I know of Him only makes me want to be with Him

- C. It is thrilling now – to know God and walk with Him – but this is just a foretaste

Continue: **1 Co 13:12 (ESV)** For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. *Now I know in part; then I shall know fully...*

- 1). I love this thought about the new Jerusalem – or heavenly home

**Re 21:23 (ESV)** And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for *the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb.*

- a). Bathed in His presence for all of eternity – bring it

**Transition:** We need to understand this idea of the “Incomprehensibility of God”

- A. We will not be able to fully grasp God until we are in eternity – it will probably take all of eternity
- B. There are some subjects where this reality becomes very apparent

- 1). Where we really see the depth of the divine being  
and the shallowness of man's ability to grasp that depth

- C. Our subject we will spend our time on will make you feel this way “The Trinity”

- 1). J. I. Packer put it this way in his book “Concise theology”

(This subject of the trinity) “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”

- 2). It is a thought that goes far beyond man's ability to reason and exceeds man's logic

But a subject clearly seen in the Bible and therefore must be accepted as true

- a). We must not deny this truth simply because our puny intellect can't figure it out

## II. THE TRIUNE GOD

**Intro:** The term trinity is not in the Bible – but the concept is clearly there

## 1. Trinity defined

Let's lay the groundwork that we need to know

- A. There is only one true God
- B. That one God exists in three persons
- C. Each of the three persons is distinct from the other two

## One God

### 1. Old Testament teaches there is only one God

**Dt 6:4–5 (ESV)** “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, *the LORD is one*.<sup>(5)</sup> You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

- A. This was prayed twice every day by devout Jews

### 2. The New Testament agrees

- A. Jesus quoted Deut. 6:4 in Mark 12

**Mk 12:28–30 (ESV)** And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, “Which commandment is the most important of all?”<sup>(29)</sup> Jesus answered, “The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, *the Lord is one*.’<sup>(30)</sup> And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’

- B. You find this thought in the writings of the Apostles

**Eph 4:6 (ESV)** *one God* and Father of all...

**1 Ti 2:5 (ESV)** For there is *one God*, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,

**Point:** The Bible clearly teaches there is only one God

- A. But the Bible also clearly teaches that there is a plurality of persons within that one God

## In Three Persons: The Plurality of the Godhead

### 1. The Old Testament teaches the plurality of the Godhead (Trinity)

- A. See it in the creation of man

**Ge 1:26 (ESV)** Then God said, “Let *us* make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness...”

- 1). God = singular. Said to “Us” and “Our” = plural
- 2). Maybe He was speaking to angels – Can’t be – has to be to other divine beings

**Context – next verse: Ge 1:27 (ESV)** So God created man *in his own image, in the image of God he created him*; male and female he created them.

- a). Let us make man in our image – that image was the image of God – not angels etc.

- B. See the same thing after the fall

**Ge 3:22 (ESV)** Then the LORD God said, “Behold, *the man has become like one of us* in knowing good and evil...”

- C. Isaiah’s words are interesting – speaks of one God – but also the reality of plurality

**Is 6:8 (ESV)** And I heard the voice of the Lord (singular) saying, “Whom shall *I* send, and who will go for *us*?”...

- 1). Whom shall I send (singular) – but NOT who will go for “me”  
But who will go for “us” – plural

**Point:** So the Old Testament clearly indicates there’s only one God

But within that one God we find plurality - there are “us’s” and “our’s”

### 2. The plurality of God in the New Testament

- A. See this in the teaching and example of Jesus
- 1). He prayed to the Father as God
    - a). Therefore we see that there is a heavenly Father that is distinct from Jesus the son
  - 2). But Scripture also teaches that Jesus is God
 

**Jn 20:28 (ESV)** Thomas answered him, “My Lord *and my God!*”

**Ro 9:5 (ESV)** To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, *who is God over all*, blessed forever. Amen.

**Tt 2:13 (ESV)** waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of *our great God and Savior Jesus Christ*,

    - a). I’m amazed People say the Bible never says that Jesus is God

**Transition:** Jesus prayed to the Father as God – taught His disciples that He was God
- B. The NT also recognizes the Holy Spirit as God (He is a person not an “it”)
- Ac 5:3–4 (ESV)** 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? <sup>(4)</sup> 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.*”
- 1). You lied to the Holy Spirit you were lying to God
- C. We see the plurality of the Godhead in Jesus’ baptism and in His teaching on baptism
- Mk 1:9–11 (ESV)** In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. <sup>(10)</sup> And when *he (Jesus)* came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the *Spirit descending* on him like a dove. <sup>(11)</sup> And a *voice came from heaven*, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”
- 1). Here we have the Father – the Son and the Spirit all present at the same time
- D. Jesus teaching on baptism shows a plurality of the Godhead
- Mt 28:19 (ESV)** Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the *Father* and of the *Son* and of the *Holy Spirit*,
- E. One more. You have the Trinitarian blessing of Paul
- 2 Co 13:14 (ESV)** The grace of the *Lord Jesus Christ* and the love of *God (the Father)* and the fellowship of the *Holy Spirit* be with you all.
- Summary:** Bible clearly teaches there’s only *one* God  
Yet clearly teaches a *plurality* within that *one* God
- A. That plurality is made up of the three distinct persons of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit
- 1). The Father is God but He is not the Son or the Spirit
  - 2). Jesus Christ the Son is God but He is not the Father or the Spirit
  - 3). The Spirit is God but He is not the Father or the Son
- Transition:** That’s a bit complex – but it’s gets harder - we have to try to piece all this together
- A. If you think I’ve could do this in a way that is simple to grasp = wrong
- 1). I studied some of the massive minds of Christianity – they all came to same conclusion  
It’s impossible to fully grasp the depth of the divine being with shallow human intellects
- B. That doesn’t mean we shouldn’t try to wrestle through it – see what we can understand

### III. THE TRINITY DEFINED

#### 1. Start with a quote by J.I. Packer (just to show you the complexity)

The basic assertion of this doctrine is that the unity of the one God is complex. The three personal “subsistences” (as they are called) are coequal and coeternal centers of self-awareness, each being “I” in relation to two who are “you” and each partaking of the full divine essence (the “stuff” of deity, if we may dare to call it that) along with the other two. They are not three roles played by one person (that is *modalism*), nor are they three gods in a cluster (that is *tritheism*); the one

God (“he”) is also, and equally, “they,” and “they” are always together and always cooperating, with the Father initiating, the Son complying, and the Spirit executing the will of both, which is his will also.

- A. Get that? Easy right! (that’s what we’re dealing with here) – let’s try to unpack that
- B. This one God consists in three persons who are co-equal, co-eternal and all equally God
  - 1). In other words all three have always been there – have always shared an equality
- C. Each of these persons is distinct from the other two – in their personalities and in their work
  - 1). It is clear that only Jesus took upon Himself humanity and died for our sins
  - 2). It is clear that Christ was sent by the Father and not the Spirit
  - 3). It is clear that the Holy Spirit alone is the one who regenerates people

**Point:** So One God comprised of three distinct individuals –

- A. Who always fully co-operating with each other  
AND who all work towards the same exact purposes

**Thought:** This is going to frustrate you – that is as far as I can go in explaining this

- A. The truth of this doctrine is beyond you and me – it will leave us with tension and questions
  - 1). We must learn to live with that tension – let’s look at that

## 2. **Warning: Be careful what you do with this Biblical tension**

- A. Man has a problem with handling mystery in the Bible – it makes us nervous
  - 1). To ease this tension, we can take what we don’t understand fully – such as the Trinity  
And force it to become something our minds can grasp
- B. One way of doing this is by embracing the teaching called “Modalism”
  - 1). Modalism teaches there is one God – one individual - who simply played three roles
    - a). When it was necessary to be the Father – He acted like the Father
    - b). When it was necessary to be the Son – He changed hats & acted like the Son...
    - c). When it was necessary to be the Spirit – He did what the Spirit does
  - 2). That is incorrect – it is ONE God in three distinct persons = three distinct individuals

**Point:** We are going to have to allow God’s book to be God’s book –

- A. We are going to have to realize His thoughts are beyond us
  - 1). That the incomprehensibility of God is certainly true in this case
- B. We are going to have to accept that His book clearly states there is one God in three persons
  - 1). At least you know now where it states that

**Transition:** If this is so complicated – why bother? Just let it go – move along nothing to see here!

- A. We must bring it up because it is important – many important doctrines hinge on this

## IV. THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS DOCTRINE

### The Doctrine of The Trinity and The Forgiveness of Sin

#### 1. **If there is no Trinity you are left with one God comprised of only one person**

- A. Since Jesus’ taught the Father was God – there is the one God = no room for Jesus
  - 1). You need the plurality of the Trinity to make room – One God in Three Persons

#### 2. **If Jesus isn’t God who is He? If the Trinity isn’t true and there is no room**

- A. He is a good man. A great prophet. A great teacher = but a mere man can’t forgive sins
  - 1). Isn’t that what the teachers of the law say when Jesus forgave the paralytics sin

**Mk 2:5-7 (ESV)** And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “**Son, your sins are forgiven.**”

<sup>(6)</sup> Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, <sup>(7)</sup> “Why does this man speak like that? **He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?**”

- a). They are absolutely right – no one can forgive sin but God
- B. What they failed to realize – when Jesus said “Your sins are forgiven” – He was saying “I am God!”
- Thought:** The doctrine of the Trinity is important – only one person in the Godhead – you’re lost
- A. The Father took that one spot –
  - 1). Therefore God didn’t die on the cross a man did
  - 2). Therefore the one who claimed to forgive sin couldn’t
- Transition:** But there is another huge problem about salvation if there is no trinity

## The Issue of Jesus, Righteousness and The Doctrine of The Trinity

### 1. If the Trinity is not true you cannot get into heaven because of unrighteousness

- A. To get into heaven you not only have to have the guilt of your sin removed – God on the cross  
You must have righteousness added to your life
  - 1). The unrighteous must be judged  
**Ro 1:18 (ESV)** For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men...
- B. I really need righteousness – what is it? 100% compliance to God’s law – *perfect obedience*  
**Jas 2:10 (ESV)** For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it.
  - 1). One failure and you’re out  
**Jesus put it this way: Mt 5:48 (ESV)** You must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

### 2. Problem: You’re not righteous – you’re not perfect - you have sinned

- A. But God has an amazing solution
  - 1). For all who trust in His Son – He will give Christ’s righteous status to you
    - a). He will give you the righteousness you need to get into heaven
  - 2). Why we say Christ not only had to die for you – to pay for your sin  
He also had to live for you – to live that life that earned that righteous standing you need  
**Ro 5:19 (ESV)** For as by the one man’s disobedience (Adam’s) the many were made sinners, *so by the one man’s obedience (Christ’s) the many will be made righteous.*

#### That’s the doctrine of substitution

**2 Co 5:21 (ESV)** For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

- 1). God puts your sin into Christ’s account – and treats Him as if He lived your life
- 2). Then He puts Christ’s righteousness – that He earned through perfect obedience into your account  
*and treats you as if you lived His life*
  - a). He gets what you deserve – wrath on the cross for your sin
  - b). You get what He earned through His perfect obedience – righteousness  
Acceptance with God – entrance into heaven
- 3). This all comes to you through faith  
**Rom 3:21-22 (NIV)** But now a *righteousness from God*, (Not your own righteousness) apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. (22) *This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.*
  - a). There is that perfection Jesus said we needed  
**Mt 5:48 (ESV)** You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.
    - 1a). God imputes the perfect obedience of Christ into your account

**Transition:** That is a long way to get to the point I’m making

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**2. If there is no trinity – there can be no righteousness to give to you**

- A. If Jesus is not God – if He was just a man – who had an earthly father
  - 1). That means his father passed on to Jesus that fallen nature inherited from Adam
    - a). Therefore he was born a sinner like us – a lawbreaker – He was not righteous
    - b). Therefore we are still unrighteous – and under God’s judgment

**Summary:** If there is no Trinity you are as lost as can be!

- A. Jesus wasn’t God – He did not have the right to forgive your sin  
AND He didn’t have the righteousness you need to get into heaven
  - 1). He was just another man who needed a Savior too!

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**The Doctrine of the Trinity and the Holy Spirit****1. We claim after salvation God Himself takes up residency in our life**

- A. To empower us to live the Christian life, to guide us and to gift us to serve God
  - 1). We understand that all of that comes through the Holy Spirit within us

**Thought:** If there’s no trinity – then the Holy Spirit is not God – then who is in us?

- A. Is there anybody at all – are we just fooling ourselves when we speak of being empowered - led
- B. If there is an actual presence that is scary – who it is? Can we trust him, her...it?

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**CONCLUSION****1. With this doctrine we face as Packer said:**

“... perhaps the most difficult thought that the human mind has ever been asked to handle...”

- A. It is a thought that easily exceeds our ability to grasp it
- B. That should not frustrate us – we should expect that to happen in our study of God
  - 1). If we did not encounter truth that was beyond us that would be the scary thing
    - a). I’d hate to have a God small enough to be contained within my mental capacity  
Bruce Milne (To know the Truth) “For all its difficulty, the Trinity is simply the price to be paid for having a God who is great enough to command our worship and service”

**Point:** Can we grasp it all? No! It is beyond us

- A. Can we believe it to be true anyway – YES – it is clearly taught in the scriptures
  - 1). Therefore let us bow before the Word
  - 2). Humbly realizing that the problem does not stem from God’s truth – but from our limited capacity

**2. We also saw why it is so important**

- A. How it affects forgiveness and imputed righteousness
- B. How it affects the doctrine of the Holy Spirit
- C. How it affects evangelism