

The Triunity of God

by Keith Malcomson

The Bible teaches that God is one in essence, but three in person, and that we can experience the unity and oneness of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

Scripture: Genesis 1:26, Deuteronomy 4:35, Psalm 25:14, Mark 12:29, John 10:30, John 14:16, John 17:21, Romans 16:25, 1 Corinthians 8:4

Topics: "Trinity Doctrine", "Godhead Unity"

Description

Keith Malcomson addresses the confusion surrounding the nature of God, particularly focusing on the denial of the trinity by various religious groups throughout history. He delves into the biblical teaching of the triune nature of God, emphasizing the unity and oneness of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Malcomson highlights the importance of understanding God's triunity and refutes the Oneness doctrine that denies the distinct persons within the Godhead. He explains how the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit work together in perfect unity for the redemption of mankind, inviting believers to enter into a practical unity and oneness with the triune God.

Transcript

Amongst religious groups and even in the church in recent centuries there has been much confusion concerning the very nature of God. Some groups like the Mormons founded by Joseph Smith (1805-1844) have denied the eternal existence and divinity of God and teach that Christ was the brother of Satan. The Jehovah Witnesses deny that Jesus is God. They believe He is higher than the angels but lower than God.

But such teachings are not new. Periodically throughout church history individual teachers and diverse groups have appeared who have denied the personality of God, the divinity of Christ (Arian) and the trinity of God (Unitarian). In this article we will look at the biblical teaching concerning the trinity of God in the context of the challenge brought forth by those who deny that the Bible teaches the doctrine of the trinity.

Between 1913 and 1916 an old teaching broke forth in the midst of the Pentecostal movement called the Oneness or Jesus Only doctrine. This was initially based upon a sudden revelation that gripped the minds and hearts of certain gifted preachers who went on to strongly oppose the teaching of the trinity. They believed that God was one person and that to teach a trinity of persons in the Godhead was heresy. They claimed that God was one person manifest in three ways as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Assemblies of God as well as many other denominations strongly withstood this teaching and the division is soon brought to many churches.

Today the various Oneness Pentecostal groups claim to have about 24 million followers across the world although some state that 2 million is more realistic. This is comprised of 90 denominations across 57 countries. Some groups are thoroughly Evangelical apart from their denial of the trinity but others have added certain teachings which clearly undermine the biblical truth concerning salvation. They have added to their oneness doctrine the necessity of a person being baptised in water in Jesus name and of speaking in tongues in order to be truly or fully saved.

The Oneness of God

Certainly one of the main and most pointed arguments put forth by those teaching against a trinity of persons in the godhead is the fact that the Bible continually states that God is "one." They believe that this simple, sure and sound biblical fact undermines and challenges any teaching concerning a trinity of persons in the godhead.

While each consecutive world empire such as Babylon, Egypt, Greece and Rome promoted multiple gods the Lord's people have only and always believed in one true God. This is clearly taught in both the Old and New Testaments. Any departure from this, even to infer that there may be three distinct Gods, is clearly contradictory to what the Bible teaches.

The Old Testament Scriptures are very clear in stating that there is only one true God: "the LORD he is God; there is none else beside him" (Deut.4:35), and "Hear, O Israel: The LORD thy God is one LORD" (6:4). When we come to the New Testament Christ affirms and proclaims the very same: "And Jesus answered him...The Lord our God is one Lord" (Mk.12:29-34).

This truth that God is one and that there are no gods beside Him and that all others that are named gods are false gods was held, maintained, preached and taught by the early church including Paul: "...there is none other God but one. For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him" (I Cor.8:4-6).

But in I John 5:7 we are told, "there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost; these three are one." By this we see that there is no contradiction in calling the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost one as well as three. God is just as much three as He is one.

The Word 'trinity' simply means three in unity. "One" does not mean one person but three persons in unity. These three are one. We cannot think of the oneness of God without considering the threeness of God. Being one does not deny that He is three; neither does being three deny that He is indeed one.

Those who teach the oneness doctrine deny that God is a trinity of persons. They teach that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are three manifestations or offices of the one God. While they teach that God is one person we teach that God is three persons bound together in love by a Holy Covenant as one God.

The tri-unity and oneness of God are both clearly and constantly stated and reaffirmed in the New Testament: "But to us there is but one God the Father, of whom are all things and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him" (I Cor.8:6). "One Spirit...one Lord...One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Eph.4:4-6). These three are called one and this one is the eternal God.

These Scriptures cannot be talking about three manifestations of one person. We know that Christ claims the three distinct ministries of prophet, priest and king yet we never see Him as prophet talking to Himself as king; or as priest praying to Himself as prophet. But in scripture we do have the Father and Son communicating with each other within this oneness of their unity and speaking about each other in distinct terms: "I and my father are one" (Jn.10:31) "...even as we are one..." (17:2). So this oneness or unity is only displayed by Christ's oneness with another and that other is His Father in Heaven.

Oneness Defined

When the Bible uses the word "one" we must stop and consider exactly what it means. Oneness speaks of an indwelling of each other. Note how this is to be 'known' and 'believed': "I and my Father are one...that ye may know and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him" (Jn.10:30, 38). "Have I been so long time with you and yet hast thou not known me Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?...but the Father that dwelleth in me he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me: or else believe me for the works sake" (Jn.14:9-11). Notice that Christ does not say that He is the Father but that He is in the Father and that the father is in Him.

Again Christ prayed: "That they all may be one; as thou Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me...that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them and thou in me, that they may be perfect in one" (17:21-23).

From this we can see that even we as believers are to be made one with God through the Father and Son indwelling us and us indwelling Christ. The fact that we are one with Christ does not deny distinct personality. Also that we are one people in Christ does not deny our unique individual personalities.

We can also see elsewhere in the scriptures how individuals can come together either in relationship, fellowship, purpose or work and so be called one. "Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Gen 2:24). "Behold the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do" (1:6). "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one" (I Cor.3:6-8). "There is one body...where there is nether Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all" (Eph.4:4; Col.3:11).

The 'oneness' spoken of in the scriptures is not of personage, but of counsel, fellowship, agreement, purpose, vision, work love and glory. There are not three Gods, but only one. Apart from this oneness there is no God; we cannot speak of these three outside of being one.

Throughout scripture we see the individual operation of specific tasks yet within total unity: "And God said, Let us make man in our image after our likeness" (Gen 1:26). In chapter 5:1 we can see that the "us" was indeed the one true God not an angel or any other being: "In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him." Elsewhere we see the same: "Let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech" (11:7), "So the Lord scattered them..." (v8), "...the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth" (v9), "And the Lord God said, Behold the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil...Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden...so he drove out the man" (3:22-24). "Also I heard the voice of the Lord saying, whom shall I send, and who

will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me" (Isa.6:8).

Here we find God using terms like "us" and "our" concerning His divine council and actions in relation to man. The oneness of God as revealed in the Old Testament does have manifest within it a communion, planning, ordering and acting which can only be attributed to distinct persons.

King David writes that "The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant" (Ps.25:14). The word "secret" that he uses here is the Hebrew word sod which according to Strong's dictionary means: - a session, a company of persons in close deliberation; by implication intimacy, consultation, a secret: - assembly, counsel, inward, secret, counsel (H5475). It is literally talking about people sitting down and talking together where the secrets of their hearts are revealed in order to establish a purpose. He says that the secret intimate council of the LORD will be revealed to them that fear Him.

Job was another man who understood that there was a secret council in which God made His wise plans and which were revealed to him in the days of his youth (Job 15:8; 29:4). Solomon taught that the secret of the Lord is with the righteous (Prov.3:32). Amos says: "Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets" (3:7).

We see something of this secret intimate council being revealed to King David in Psalm 110: "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool" (110:1). Here we have the "LORD" (Jehovah) speaking to the "Lord" (Adonai). The name Jehovah was first used in Genesis 2:4 in the context of being the creator of heaven and earth. The name Adonai is first used by Abram in prayer to God in Genesis 15:2. David also called Adonai "my Lord." David received a prophetic insight into the council chamber of God where the Father spoke to the Son concerning His High Priestly ministry. David acknowledged Him as the Messiah and submitted himself to Him by calling Him "my lord" (Mt.22:42-46; Mk.12:35-37; 16:19; Acts 2:34; Heb.1:3).

The Practical Triunity of God

In the New Testament Paul tells us that the Gospel which he calls the preaching of Jesus Christ was "according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Rom.16:25). The Gospel of Jesus Christ reveals the wonderful mystery and secret of the Lord. There is a manifestation through the gospel of the eternal plan, council and purpose of God which was made between the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost in eternity past.

In the Gospels we see Jesus being baptized in the Jordon, the Holy Spirit descending from heaven upon Christ, and the Father in heaven saying "This is my beloved Son" (Mt.3:16-17). It is very clear that at the very same point in time that Christ is actually, literally and physically standing in the waters of Jordon, the Father is in heaven and the Spirit is descending.

To deny that these three are distinct persons is confusion. To do such is to infer that the text of scripture does not mean what it says. Those who do this must answer the question as to where exactly the Son is, where the Father is and where the Spirit is during this event at this particular point in time. Why does scripture give them distinct places of abode if they are not distinct persons? This is very correct terminology for a God manifest in three persons but not if God is one person.

As we follow the earthly and heavenly ministry of Christ we see that this triune God communicates distinctly, with clear commands and carries out different tasks and commissions. This is perfectly logical and biblical if it is three persons dwelling, working and communing together in unity. But confusing to say the least if God is one person.

"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you forever...I go unto the Father...it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you: but if I depart, I will send him unto you...But when the comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me" (Jn.14:16, 28; 16:1; 15:26).

All true revelation is based on the written scriptures and will never contradict it. The Holy Spirit inspired the scriptures to reveal truth and to reveal the true God. Those who seek a special revelation directly from the Spirit concerning His nature, attributes and manifestation that is not clearly and distinctly written in the Word are looking in the wrong direction. Those who have received a 'special' revelation from God that the doctrine of the trinity is heresy have moved away from the authority of the scriptures. The revelation of God has been written for all to read.

These three are eternally one, and this heavenly oneness has been manifested among men and in the Word of God. This wonderful triune God has redeemed man in order to bring him into the same wonderful unity, oneness, fellowship, communion, love, covenant and glory which has existed between the three persons of the trinity from all eternity.

In man's redemption the Father planned it and sent the Son to accomplish it. The Son under took to willingly do it by laying down His life and so purchased our redemption at Calvary. The Holy Spirit now personally and practically applies this redemption by convicting us of sin, regenerating us and bringing us to trust fully in Christ's full provision. These three persons are one eternal redeeming God working in perfect unity for our redemption yet accomplish very different parts in that redemption.

"That they may be one: as thou Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (Jn.17:21). We now are called into a practical unity and oneness with this triune God through blood redemption to enjoy this wonderful fellowship, love, communion, direction and enabling of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in revealing the glory of the one true God to a lost world.

We now have the privilege of inviting hell deserving sinners to enter into a wonderful relationship of oneness and unity with God the Father by knowing that He so loved them that He sent His Son to die on the Cross for them. All those who trust on the one who the Father sent to die for them will enjoy for all eternity this wonderful bond of fellowship in which they will be one with this eternal triune God.

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