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The Trinity

The topic of the trinity is difficult because it is such a profound, mind boggling topic that it necessitates a level of understanding that humans do not possess.

However, we affirm the doctrine of the Trinity for one really good reason:

- It is what the Bible teaches.

I. THE DOCTRINE DEFINED

The word "trinity" is not found in the Bible. But the concept of the Trinity is all over the Bible.

Webster's 1828 dictionary defined the Trinity as "the union of three persons (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit) in one Godhead, so that all the three are one God as to substance, but three persons as to individuality."

God is one in essence and three in person.

In other words the Bible is very clear that there is only One God . . .but this God exists in three "persons".

We are saying that the Father is God, the Son is God and the Holy Spirit is God.
They are not three gods but only one God.

The Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Spirit, the Spirit is not the Father. They are distinct but one.

[It is important to clarify. We are not saying there are three Gods. We are also not saying that God has three "forms" like steam, water, and ice.

This is a heresy called modalism.

In this heresy God is pictured as moving from one "mode" to the other – choosing to show Himself in a different way at different times.

Modalism is probably the most common theological error concerning the nature of God.]

God is the Father, Son and Spirit at the same time and at all times.

We are also not saying that the three persons of the Trinity are pieces of God.

That would mean that the Father was 1/3 God, the Son 1/3 God and the Spirit 1/3 God.

There is one God . . . this one God exists in three distinct persons: Father, Son and Spirit at the same time. He doesn't move from one way of showing Himself to another.

There are all kinds of analogies used to try to picture the Trinity, but none are very good.

The Trinity is hard to grasp because we have nothing like it in our existence. God is higher and beyond our world but has to be described by human words that have limits.

II. EVIDENCE FOR THE TRINITY

But the real question is this: Is the doctrine of the Trinity true? The Bible teaches several things:

A. The Bible Affirms the Unity of God (Deut. 6:4; James 2:19)

The most famous and prominent declaration is part of what is called the Jewish "Shema" which is found in Deuteronomy 6:4 "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD."

This belief is reiterated in the New Testament.

For example in James 2:19 we read, "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble."

There is really no debate on this point.

Jewish belief has always been anchored to monotheism.

In other words Jews have always affirmed that there is only one God. Christians stand in that same truth.

B. The Bible Asserts the Deity of the Each of the Three Persons

The Bible (which strongly affirms that there is but one God) also affirms that in addition to the Father, the Son (Jesus) is divine (or God) and that the Holy Spirit is divine (or God).

When talking about Jesus, the Son the Bible says, in Colossians 2:9 "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

Sometimes the claims are direct, sometimes they are implied.

Not only does the Bible makes claims that Jesus is God.

It recognizes Jesus as possessing attributes of God.

- Eternity (1 Tim. 1:17; Heb. 1:2-3,8)
- Holiness applied to both (Jn. 17:11; Romans 1:4; 1 Cor. 1:30)
- Immutability (Hebrews 13:8)
- Omnipotence: (Psalm 135:5-7; Matt. 28:18; Romans 15:13,17; 1 Cor. 15:24-27)
- Omnipresence: (Psalm 139:7-10; Jeremiah 23:24; Matthew 28:20)
- Omniscience (Matthew 6:8, 32; John 2:24-25; 1 Corinthians 2:10-11)
- Creator: (Genesis 1:1-2; Psalm 104:30; John 1:3)

When talking about the Holy Spirit.

Then Peter said, "3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to **lie to the Holy Ghost**, and to keep back *part* of the price of the land? 4 Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? **thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.**" (Acts 5:3-4)

Peter begins by saying that Ananias has lied to the Holy Spirit.

At the end of the passage he says that Ananias has lied to God.

The conclusion is obvious: the Holy Spirit and God are synonymous.

The Holy Spirit is often spoken of as the one who inspired the prophets who are said to be "speaking the Word of the Lord".

The Holy Spirit is called "the spirit of truth".

The Holy Spirit is also said to "search all things".

And blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is seen to be the ultimate sin against the Lord.

Both the Son and the Spirit are referred to in terms that are reserved only for God.

C. The Bible Shows Each of the Three Persons Working Together

There is evidence for the Trinity in Creation.

The Bible teaches that all three members of the Godhead acted in Creation.

God the Father spoke. Gen. 1:3, "And God said, Let there be light."

God the Son was the Word spoken, John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 The same was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made by him;

and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men.”

God the Holy Spirit moved upon the face of the waters, Gen. 1:2; Job 26:12,13.

There is evidence for the Trinity in Christ’s birth.

God the Father gave His only Son, John 3:16.

God the Son was born into the world, Luke 2:11.

God the Spirit came upon Mary to cause conception, Luke 1 :35.

Luke 1:35

35 And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

There is evidence for the Trinity at Jesus’ baptism.

Matthew 3:16-17

16 And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:

17 And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

We see the Son being baptized, the Holy Spirit descending upon Him in the form of a dove, and the Father speaking from heaven.

There is evidence for the Trinity in Christ’s baptismal formula

(Mat. 28:19).

Observe that believers are to be baptized in the name of, singular, not in the names of, plural.

God is one and He is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

There is evidence for the Trinity in Jesus’ relationship with the Father.

On the one hand, Jesus said that He and the father are one (John 10:30). On the other hand, Jesus prayed to the Father (John 17:1), submitted to the Father (John 12:50), and sits at the right hand of the Father (Acts 2:34).

There is evidence of the Trinity in John 14:16 and 26.

John 14:16

16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;

John 14:26

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.

In these passages we see the Son, the Spirit, and the Father acting in various ways, acting in one accord but having different functions

There is evidence for the Trinity in Redemption.

God the Father accepted the sacrifice of Calvary, Heb. 9:14.

God the Son offered Himself as our substitute, Heb. 9 :14.

God the Spirit - Jesus offered Himself "through the eternal Spirit" Heb. 9:14.

There is evidence for the Trinity in Christ’s Resurrection.

The Bible teaches that Christ was raised by God the Father (Acts 2:24), by the Spirit (1 Pet. 3:18), and by Himself (Jn. 2:19, 21).

There is evidence for the Trinity in prayer.

We are taught to pray to the Father, through the enablement of the Spirit, by the name of Jesus Christ, because it is Jesus and His atonement that has given us access to God.

Matthew 6:9; Romans 1:8; 8:26.

There is evidence for the Trinity in the Holy Spirit's Personality.

Some Bible passages speak of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of God or the Spirit of Christ.

The Holy Spirit is one with the Father and Son, yet He is also distinct (Mat. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14; 1 Jn. 5:7; Eph. 2:18; 4:4-6; Jn. 14:16, 26; 16:7-15).

D. The Bible Lists the persons of the Trinity Together as Equals

- (2 Corinthians 13:14) "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, *be* with you all. Amen.
- Christian Baptism (Matthew 28:19) "*baptize in the name (singular) of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit.*"

What I hope you see from these references is that the Trinity is the only logical conclusion from the teaching of Scripture.

III. IMPLICATIONS OF THE TRINITY

The Trinity is an important doctrine because it gives us a standard by which we can separate true teaching from false teaching

In spite of the fact that the Trinity is seen as essential Christian doctrine, lots of people deny the doctrine. Let me give you some examples,

The Mormon Church rejects the idea that Jesus was the eternal God.

They would call Him a "son of God" but in the same way that you and I might be called a son of God.

They would not say Jesus was the eternal God.

They proclaim that Jesus was created before the world was created and holds a special place, but He is not God.

The Jehovah's Witnesses ridicule the idea of the Trinity.

They will often say, "1+1+1 does not equal one.

But, of course that is not what the Christian is saying. It might be better to say that the Christian is saying $1 \times 1 \times 1 = 1$.

A person or church that does not believe and affirm the Trinity is not a Christian person or church.

It may be difficult for our finite minds to understand how the doctrine of the trinity works, but that does not negate the TRUTH.

We have ONE God:

The Father is God

The Son is God

The Holy Spirit is God