

tells us that the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend (*Exod 33:11*).

God does not change. He said, "I am the LORD, I change not" (*Mal 3:6*; see *James 1:17*). This means that the God who has revealed Himself in the Bible is just the same today. The God who spoke to Abraham, Moses, David, and Isaiah, and who sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to earth, is the same now as He was before He created the heavens and the earth. Keeping this in mind will greatly help us as we seek God and pray unto Him.

What is the Trinity?

When Christians speak of God, they will often speak of the Trinity - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. You will not find the words "Trinity" or "Triune" in the Scriptures, but you will find the teaching that God is one, yet three. Although it does not use these words, the Bible teaches that God is three Persons in one essence (or substance). This sounds very difficult, and we must admit that no one can understand it completely, but we can grasp something of it if we keep very closely to the Bible.

We must be very careful to avoid four common mistakes:

(1) Sometimes people have spoken as if there were three Gods, but this is a very serious error. There is only one God (*Deut 6:4*; *Isaiah 44:6*; *1 Cor 8:4*).

(2) Some treat the Father as if He were the one true God, and the Son and the Spirit as if they were not really God at all. The modern cult calling themselves Jehovah's Witnesses and many modern theologians make this tragic mistake (see *Matt 28:19*; *Col 2:9*; *Matt 12:31,32*).

(3) Some have thought of the three Persons in the Godhead as being only one Person who appears in three different forms, just as water can appear as ice or steam. However, the three Persons are distinct from one another. The

Father was not crucified and the Son was not poured out on the Day of Pentecost (*Matt 3:16,17*; *27:46*; *Luke 23:46*; *Acts 2:1-4*).

(4) Sometimes you may see illustrations which are supposed to help you to understand the Trinity. For example you might see a circle divided into three parts. Each part is supposed to represent one Person of the Holy Trinity. This may appear to be helpful, but it will give you a wrong idea of God. The circle has three parts, and if you remove one part, it is no longer a circle. However, this cannot be true of the Trinity because the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are not each one-third of the Godhead. Each is fully God - but there are not three Gods!

So you see that we can never understand God completely. Only the Triune God can understand Himself (*Matt 11:27*; *1 Cor 2:11*). But we can understand that He is one God in three Persons.

What Does the Old Testament Teach About the Trinity?

Although the main teaching about God as Trinity comes from the New Testament, God nevertheless prepared the way for this teaching by giving His people hints of it in the Old Testament. We can find these hints in many places:

(1) Sometimes God speaks of Himself in the plural. For example, He says, "Let us make man in our image" (*Gen 1:26*). We would expect God to have said, "I will make man in my image," but He did not say that. Every word of Scripture is precious (*Matt 4:4*; *5:18*). There was a reason why God spoke in the plural. We now know that God was preparing His people for the time when He would reveal more clearly that He is one God in three Persons. There are other places where God speaks in the plural (*Gen 3:22*; *11:5-7*; *Isaiah 6:8*).

(2) In Old Testament times, God often spoke to His people through an

angel called "the Angel of the LORD" (the Angel of Jehovah). Yet in many places "the Angel of the LORD" is also called "the LORD." In Genesis 16, for example, we read of Hagar running away from Sarai. In verse 7 the Angel of the LORD finds her and begins to speak to her. At the end of his speech, however, Hagar says that she had actually "seen God" (*v 13*). The Angel of the LORD was undoubtedly the Lord Jesus. We can see this in other passages, too (*Gen 18:1-33*; *Exod 3:2,6,14*; *Judges 6:11-16*; *13:3,9,22*).

(3) There are other places also where it is indicated that there is more than one Person in the Godhead. Just before the Israelites attacked Jericho, Joshua saw a man who is described as the commander of the Lord's army (*Joshua 5:13,15*). But this "man" (*5:13*) is also said to be "the LORD" Himself (*6:2*). Isaiah said the coming Messiah would be both "a child" and "the Mighty God" (*Isaiah 9:6*). Throughout the Old Testament, God was wonderfully preparing His people to receive the truth about the Trinity (see *Psalms 45:6,7*; *110:1*; *Isaiah 48:16*; *Jer 23:5,6*; *Dan 3:25*; and *Hosea 1:7*). In fact, one of the Hebrew words for "God" is "Elohim," and it can be singular or plural.

The Father is God

This section will be very short because even the heretical cults agree that the Father is God. Their error is to think that only the Father is God.

In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus taught Christians to pray, "Our Father who art in heaven..." (*Matt 6:9*). Later Jesus promised that the Father would give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him (*Luke 11:13*). Jesus described the Temple in Jerusalem as "my Father's house" (*John 2:16*). Jesus also declared that He was the Son of Man on whom God the Father had set His seal (*John 6:27*). In His high-priestly prayer, Jesus looked towards heaven and called upon the Father, describing Him as "the only true God"

(*John 17:1-3*). Jesus' last words on the cross were, "Father, into Thy hands I commit my spirit" (*Luke 23:46*). You will find that in the New Testament the Father is referred to as God over 250 times.

It is important that we understand the difference between an earthly father and God the Father. An earthly father only *becomes* a father when a child is born unto him. But God never became a Father. He was always God the Father, because God the Son was always His Son.

The Son is God

When Thomas saw that the Lord Jesus had actually risen from the dead, he cried out, "My Lord and my God" (*John 20:28*). That was a very strange thing for a Jew to say. To say that a man is God is either blasphemy or very high truth itself. The high priest, Caiaphas, thought it was blasphemy (*Matt 26:63-66*), but Jesus praised Thomas' confession as true (*John 20:29*). Indeed, the Scriptures often declare that Jesus Christ is God (*John 1:1,18*; *Rom 9:5*; *Phil 2:6*; *Titus 2:13*; *Heb 1:8*; *2 Peter 1:1*; *1 John 5:20*). We rightly think of Jesus as the Son of God, but this does not mean there was a time when He did not exist. Jesus is the eternal Son of God, equal to the Father (*John 5:18*).

Christ is exactly like the Father; He is "the image of the invisible God" (*Col 1:15*). We find this taught in the following verses:

(1) God is eternal; so is Christ (*John 8:58*; *Rev 1:8,17*; *22:12,13*).

(2) God is everywhere at the same time; so is Christ. This means He is with all Christians at all times (*Matt 18:20*; *28:20*).

(3) God does not change; neither does Christ. He is "the same yesterday, today, and forever" (*Heb 13:8*).

(4) God knows all things; so does Christ. He even knows our hearts (*John 2:24,25*; *21:17*; *Rev 2:23*).

(5) God is able to do all things; so is Christ (*Phil 3:21; Heb 1:3*).

We also find that Christ does things that only God can do:

(1) He created the world (*John 1:1-3; Col 1:16; Heb 1:2,3,10*).

(2) He forgives sin in a way that no mere man could do. We can forgive sins against ourselves, but Christ forgives sins against God (*Mark 2:1-12*).

(3) He will judge the world at the last day (*Matt 25:32; John 5:22; 2 Cor 5:10*).

(4) He gives eternal life (*John 10:28*).

Furthermore, there are many passages in the Old Testament which refer to God, yet when these passages are quoted in the New Testament, they are applied to the Lord Jesus. For example:

(1) When Isaiah saw the glory of God, he actually saw the Lord Jesus (*Isaiah 6:1-5 & John 12:39-42*).

(2) When the Bible says that God created the world, it also means that Christ created all things (*Psalms 102:24-27 & Heb 1:10-12*).

(3) Christians call on Christ for salvation just as the Old Testament saints called on God for salvation (*Joel 2:32 & Acts 2:21; Rom 10:13*).

(4) God is the chief cornerstone, a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence; so is Christ (*Isaiah 8:13,14; 28:16 & Rom 9:33; 1 Peter 2:6,8*).

All this means that we should worship and praise Christ just as we do God the Father (*John 5:23; Heb 1:6; Rev 5:12*). The Pharisees could not understand how Christ could be David's Lord as well as his son (*Matt 22:41-46; Psalm 110:1*), but if you belong to Christ, you will know.

The Holy Spirit is God

Because many cults and modern theologians think that the Holy Spirit is only a force or a power and not a Person, we must first show that He is a Person before showing that He is God.

Some people get confused because the New Testament was written in Greek, and the Greek word for "spirit" is *pneuma*, which is neuter. In English, all males are masculine, all females are feminine, and everything else is neuter. However, other languages do not work like this. In French, for example, "the Word" in John 1:1,14 is feminine. But this does not mean that Frenchmen think of Christ as a woman. It is the same with Greek. In fact, in John 16:13,14, the Holy Spirit is referred to as "He," not "It," even though this is not correct grammar. This shows that the Bible regards the Holy Spirit as a Person.

We can see this in other passages – the Holy Spirit teaches (*Luke 12:12; John 14:26*), testifies (*John 15:26*), guides and speaks (*John 16:13*), sends (*Acts 13:4*) and forbids (*Acts 16:6,7*). We can lie to Him (*Acts 5:3*), tempt Him (*Acts 5:9*), grieve Him (*Eph 4:30*) and even blaspheme Him (*Matt 12:31*). All these things can only be true if the Holy Spirit is a Person.

In addition, there are many passages which show clearly that the Holy Spirit is God:

(1) A lie to the Holy Spirit is the same as a lie to God (*Acts 5:3,4*).

(2) He raises the dead (*Rom 8:11*).

(3) He knows all things, even the deep things of God (*Isaiah 40:13,14; 1 Cor 2:10,11*), for He Himself is a divine Person.

(4) He is everywhere at the same time (*Psalms 139:7-10*). Because of this, He is able to be with all Christians at the same time (*1 Cor 3:16; 6:19*).

(5) He is eternal (*Heb 9:14*).

(6) He created the world (*Gen 1:2; Psalm 104:30*).

The Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God – yet there is only one God. No wonder the apostle Paul asked, "Who hath known the mind of the Lord?" (*Rom 11:34*). Augustine (*AD 354-430*) said, "If you are able to comprehend

Him, He is not God." We cannot understand ourselves (*Jer 17:9*), much less God; but we can still know –

"God in three Persons, blessed Trinity."

Conclusion

There are many places in the New Testament where the three Persons of the Trinity are seen to act together (*see Matt 3:16,17; 28:19; 1 Cor 12:4-6; 2 Cor 13:14; Gal 4:6; 1 Peter 1:2*).

Perhaps the best text to quote is Matthew 28:19 when the Lord Jesus was about to leave His disciples and return to His Father in heaven, He left them with some final instructions. One of these was to baptize believers in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Three Persons are mentioned here, but Jesus only spoke of one Name, to show that the Three are One.

In the fourth century, a Christian writer named Gregory of Nazianus wrote of the Trinity, saying, "I cannot think of the One without quickly being encircled by the splendor of the Three; nor can I discern the Three without being straightway carried back to the One."

Let us close with praise to the Trinity in the words of an ancient hymn:

*Laud and honour to the Father,
Laud and honour to the Son,
Laud and honour to the Spirit,
Ever Three and ever One,
One in might, and One in glory,
While unending ages run.*

– by Peter Barnes
Australia

THE TRIUNE GOD

What is God Like?

Men have tried to find out what God is like from the time of creation. Some have worshipped carved idols, others have tried to contact spirits, while yet others have thought that God and the world are really the same.

However, if we wish to know God, we must turn to the Bible which is God's Word, God's message to us. Nature can tell us some things about our Creator (*Rom 1:20*), and so can our conscience (*Rom 2:14-16*), but the Bible alone is wholly true and reliable. Christ Himself teaches that we must be governed only by God's Word, never by human traditions about God (*see Matt 15:1-14*).

In the Bible, God tells us that He is the only true God (*Deut 6:4; 1 Kings 8:60; John 17:3; James 2:19*) who created the whole universe (*Gen 1:1; Isaiah 40:25,26*). God tells us that He is spirit (*John 4:24*), which means that He does not have a body as we do. This is why we are not allowed to make images and pictures of Him (*Exod 20:4*).

God is perfect, without any sin (*Matt 5:48*), eternal, without beginning or ending (*Exod 3:14; Psalm 90:2*), everywhere at the same time (*1 Kings 8:27; Psalm 139; Jer 23:24*), and able to do whatever He pleases (*Psalm 115:3; 135:6; Dan 4:35*). He knows all things (*Isaiah 40:28; Jer 17:10*); and everything, even evil and suffering, takes place according to His will (*Rom 8:28; Eph 1:11*).

We sin every day – our very nature is full of sin – but God is holy (*Isaiah 6:3; Psalm 99:3*), righteous (*Psalm 145:17; Ezra 9:15*), good (*Psalm 145:9; Mark 10:18*), wise (*Psalm 104:24; Rom 11:33-36*), true (*Num 23:19; Heb 6:18*) and full of love (*1 John 4:8,16*). By nature, we are attracted to sin (*Gen 6:5; Eph 2:3*), but because God is holy, He hates sin (*Exod 34:7; Psalm 5:4-6; Hab 1:13*). Yet God can be known by man in a personal way. God's Word