

The Divine Trinity

Dear reader,

The one, only true God, Jehovah, has declared Himself in His Word, in order that we might know Him, enjoy life with Him, and praise Him.

We have noticed in past mailings that God is unique. He is a Spirit; He is infinite, independent, sovereign, all powerful, and unchangeable. He is perfectly holy, righteous, wise, loving, gracious, merciful, and longsuffering. We must know Him as unique, to praise Him the better.

Today we examine another distinct aspect of His uniqueness: the Trinity of God. The God of the Scriptures, whom Christians serve, is Triune. By this term we express the reality that God is three persons (tri-), in one Being (-une).

That God is three persons in one Being, the human mind cannot rationalize or fully understand. But we believe it, for God tells us this about Himself in Scripture. He knows what is true of Himself, and tells us, so that we know!

As to the Biblical evidence of the Trinity, we note first that Scripture repeatedly speaks of God as one. *"The LORD our God is one LORD,"* Moses told Israel (Deuteronomy 6:4). And Paul taught that there is *"One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all"* (Ephesians 4:6). God is one numerically - that is, there are not two Gods. And He is one essentially - that is, His Being is one united Being.

Yet Scripture also speaks of a plurality of persons within this one being. Already at the moment of creation, we read of the existence both of God, and of the Spirit of God (Genesis 1:1,2). Within His own Being, this God said on the sixth day of creation week: *"Let us make man in our image"* (Genesis 1:26). The point, if you missed it, is that God, one in Being, spoke in the plural. The New Testament makes clear that the persons are three in number. Christ identified the three persons when He commanded the disciples to *"teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost"* (Matthew 28:19).

The doctrine of the Trinity is significant for the Christian. It ought not be thought of as merely philosophical, abstract, or coldly orthodox.

It is significant, first, because it explains the divinity of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ is God - the second person of the Trinity. By His conception and birth, He took upon Himself the human nature. He must be God in the flesh: man, to bear the curse of God against the sins of mankind, and God, to bear that curse fully and earn for us God's favor. That He is God is evident from the many miracles which He did. But notice that while on earth, Jesus - who is God - prayed to God in heaven! The Trinity is the only explanation for this: while one person of the Godhead came to earth in the flesh, God also was in heaven.

Also the Holy Spirit is God. If not, He could not work the new life of Christ in us, and bestow

on us all the gifts which Christ earned. And yet, He is not the fulness of the Godhead - for when He was poured out on Pentecost, Christ was in heaven, at God's right hand. The Trinity explains that Jesus is God, the Holy Spirit is God, and yet God is greater than simply Jesus or the Holy Spirit.

The doctrine of the Trinity is significant, secondly, because it indicates that God is alive. Beings are not always alive, but persons are. That God is one in Being does not in itself mean God is alive. But that God is a personal God, thinking, willing, acting, and speaking, means God is alive. And He must be a living Being, in order for us to know Him and enjoy fellowship with Him!

The doctrine of the Trinity is significant, thirdly, because it speaks of God as enjoying family life and happiness in Himself from all eternity. We just spoke of enjoying fellowship with Him; salvation consists of interactive life with God! God Himself draws us into His own life. But His drawing us into His own life is not necessary for His own pleasure and happiness. From eternity He enjoys life and happiness within Himself! The first person of the Trinity, called the Father, enjoys life and happiness with the second, called the Son, in the way of the work of the Holy Spirit uniting them together in love and fellowship.

The point is this: God did not decide to create and save mankind because He was lonely, and wanted company. Rather, His decision to create and save mankind was entirely gracious; it was for our benefit. We need God! This need God supplied in sending Jesus Christ, His Son, into our flesh, to redeem us from sin; and working His Holy Spirit in our hearts, to draw us unto Himself in love.

Fourthly, the doctrine of the Trinity is significant, because it underscores that ALL the work of saving sinners from sin is the work of God ALONE. God the Father determined to save; to that end, He sent His Son to secure our salvation; and He sent the His Spirit to bestow salvation upon us.

And finally, this doctrine is significant because it emphasizes again God's greatness and uniqueness. Some people speak of God as though He is fully understandable to humans. What kind of God is that? If we fully understand God, then we are as great as God - and God is nothing special. But if we cannot fully understand God, because He is greater than we, we have every reason to trust in Him, pray to Him, and desire to fellowship more deeply with Him, the greatest being, the only Good. And we will praise Him for being God!

Pastor Douglas Kuiper

*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all.
2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe in one GOD, THE FATHER Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one LORD JESUS CHRIST, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God; Light of Light, true God of true God; begotten, not made, being of one essence with the Father; by whom all

things were made . . .

And I believe in the HOLY GHOST, the Lord and Giver of life; who proceedeth from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified; who spake by the prophets. . . .

Nicene Creed

(The Nicene Creed is a Christian creed - that is, a creed which officially sets forth some aspect of the Christian faith. This creed particularly sets forth the Christian faith regarding the Trinity of God. It was adopted by the council of Nicea in 325 AD, to combat heretical ideas regarding the Trinity.)