

*"What We Believe"*

## Session 2

### Trinity: God Is

#### I) INTRODUCTION

- A) The Church father Augustine has rightly said "If you deny the Trinity, you will lose your soul and if you try to explain the trinity you will lose your mind."
- B) Some have falsely stated that God created humanity because He was lonely and bored and didn't have anyone to fellowship with. This is completely unbiblical. From eternity past, God has existed in perfect fellowship within Himself, with Jesus Christ and with the Holy Spirit. He has lacked nothing, including relationships with something other than Himself.
- C) Each of us has a deep internal longing for community. A place where we belong, where humility is a reality and where people protect one another. The reason we have this is due to the fact that every person alive is made in the image of the Trinitarian God of the Bible.

#### II) What Is The Trinity?

- A) God is Father, Son and Spirit. One God, three persons. What I mean by persons is that God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit speak, think and have feelings like a person. Not that God is like a hungry 2 month old and 30 minutes late for dinner.
- B) The word Trinity doesn't appear in the Bible, but was first introduced by the early Church Father Tertullian in 155 A.D. and is best used to describe One God in three persons.
- C) It can be said like this "The Trinity is one God, who eternally exists as three distinct persons—The Father, Son and Spirit—who are each fully and equally God in eternal relation to each other.
- D) The Bible declares from Genesis to Revelation that there is only one God and it also teaches that there is no one like God. There is no other God who is all powerful, all eternal, all present and uncreated. This means that god's such as Baal, Chemosh, Molech, Allah, Buddha, Mother Earth, Mammon (money) and Aphrodite (the god of sex) are led by fallen angels, demons (**Deut 32:17; Psalms 106:37; 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 10:20**).
- 1) **1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 10:20** *"Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons."*
- E) We call God in three persons, a Trinitarian God. Or a God who is a trinity.

## III) What Is The Trinitarian God Of The Bible Like?

- A) In 1<sup>st</sup> **John 4:8** the Bible says *"He who does not love does not know God, for God is love."*
- B) The word love is found roughly 800 times in the whole Bible and it is a word that Jesus often used to describe His relationship with God the Father;
- 1) **John 3:35** *The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand.*
  - 2) **John 5:20** *The Father loves the Son and shows Him all that He Himself is doing.*
  - 3) **John 14:31** *I do as the Father has commanded Me, so that the world may know that I love the Father.*
- C) In the Old Testament the most scared name for God is **YAHWEH**. **YAHWEH** is a name that is used just in the Old Testament nearly 6,823 times to describe the one true God. This name for God is never used to describe lesser gods, or for a human, but only reserved for the One True God.
- D) God chose to reveal Himself to His people and to us in this way;
- 1) **Exodus 34:6-7** *The Lord, The Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty.*
  - 2) Here is the Trinitarian God of the Bible unpacked as He has revealed Himself in this passage.
    - (i) Yahweh, the Trinitarian God of the Bible is the ruler over all things. Though there are lesser gods, none of them rule over all things like Yahweh.
    - (ii) Yahweh, the Trinitarian God of the Bible is personal, not disconnected like the lesser gods of our culture.
    - (iii) Yahweh, the Trinitarian God of the Bible is a God of compassion. He sees our sin, our pain and our suffering and doesn't respond with anger, but compassion.
    - (iv) Yahweh, the Trinitarian God of the Bible doesn't only rule over us, He is involved with us and became like us for our redemption.
    - (v) Yahweh, the Trinitarian God of the Bible is a God who is slow to anger. Unlike the lesser gods of many eastern cultures, our God has a long wick, is patient with those that struggle, but becomes angry with those who refuse to repent and take advantage of His patience.
    - (vi) Yahweh, the Trinitarian God of the Bible is constant, passionate, relentless, extravagant, limitless and trustworthy in the way that He loves.

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- (vii) Yahweh, the Trinitarian God is dependable and truthful. Though the truth often hurts, He doesn't fail to tell us. This makes Him alone worthy of all trust and devotion.
  - (viii) Yahweh, the Trinitarian God of the Bible is forgiving. Though He sees all things, He is patient with us, as we reach to be like Him.
- E) What we must remember is that when God gave this description of Himself, it was in the midst of Israel's most grievous sin. In the start of **Exodus 32** just prior to this encounter where God said who He was, they had forsaken God and created golden calves, worshipped them and said the calves had brought them out of Egypt instead of Yahweh.
- F) The God of the Old testament is the same God that we see in Christ Jesus.
- 1) **John 1:14** *"And the Word (Jesus Christ) became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His (Jesus Christ) glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father(Yahweh), full of grace and truth."*
- G) John is telling us that the Father sent Jesus to show us the Father (Yahweh) so that if we have seen the Son we have seen the Father.

## **IV) Does The Trinity Appear In The Old Testament?**

- A) Some have falsely stated the Trinity only exists in the New Testament, and for this to be true it would mean that God changed from the Old Testament to the New Testament.
- 1) **Hebrews 13:8** says that *"Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever."*
  - 2) **Colossians 1:15-16** *"He (Jesus Christ) is the image of the invisible God (Yahweh, or God the Father) the first born over all creation. For by Him (Jesus Christ) all things were created (Genesis 1-2) that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created (Genesis 1-2) through Him (Jesus Christ) and are for Him (Jesus Christ)."*
    - (i) Paul, in **Colossians 1:15-16** is clearly predating the Trinity prior to the creation account.
  - 3) **John 1:3** *"All things were made (Creation as read in Genesis 1-2) through Him(Jesus Christ) and without Him (Jesus Christ) nothing was made that was made."*
  - 4) **Genesis 1:2** *"The earth was without form, and void, and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters."*
  - 5) **Genesis 1:26** *"Then God (God The Father) said, "let us (Jesus Christ/The Holy Spirit) make man in Our (Trinity) image, according to Our (Trinity) likeness..."*
  - 6) **Genesis 11:7** *"Let Us (Trinity) go down and confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech."*

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7) **Isaiah 61:1** *"The Spirit ( The Holy Spirit) of the Lord God (God the Father) is upon Me (Jesus Christ), because He has anointed Me to bring good news to the poor."*

- B) The people of the Old Testament were looking for a coming Messiah whom the Father anointed and raised up among them to lead them. This is what we call progressive revelation: meaning the further we move through the Bible, the clearer the picture of God becomes. The Trinity is not only in the Old Testament, but even clearer in the New Testament.

## V) Does The Trinity Appear In The New Testament?

- A) We can see the Trinity at work in Mary's conception;

1) **Luke 1:35** *"And the angel answered and said to her The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest (God The Father); therefore, also that Holy One (Jesus Christ) who is to be born will be called the Son of God (Jesus Christ)."*

- B) We can see the Trinity at work in Jesus' baptism;

1) **Matthew 3:16-17** *"When He (Jesus Christ) had been baptized, He (Jesus Christ) came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him (Jesus Christ) and He (Jesus Christ) saw the Spirit of God (The Holy Spirit) descending like a dove and alighting upon Him (Jesus Christ). And suddenly a voice came from Heaven, saying, "this is My (God the Father) beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"."*

- (i) Jesus is being baptized, the Holy Spirit is coming upon Him and the Father is speaking from heaven. All three Persons are there doing something different.

- C) We can see the Trinity at work in the great commission;

1) **Matthew 28:19** *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."*

- (i) Again, we are commanded by Jesus, to baptize people in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Baptism in one name in three persons.

- D) We can see the Trinity at work within our salvation;

1) **1<sup>st</sup> Peter 1:2** *"...according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ..."*

- (i) God knew us, sent His Son for our redemption, and gave us the Holy Spirit to continually renew us and keep us until the Day of Christ.

- E) God the Father devised the plan of salvation. God the Son came to die on the Cross in our place for our sins. God the Holy Spirit takes up residence in Christians and ensures our salvation. One God, in three distinct Persons.

## VI) Why Should We Study The Doctrine Of The Trinity?

- A) Many stop short in their understanding of the God of the Bible and give way to laziness. We say it's okay to love God in our hearts, but this love the Lord your God with all your mind stuff is for the scholars, for the students and for the pastors. **Matthew 22:37, Mark 12:30 Luke 10:27** command us to love God with both our minds and our hearts.
- B) We want to study the Trinity because God is a Triune God, meaning that He is three persons in One. If we treasure our relationship with God, then we should treasure the revelation of God that He unfolds before us.
- C) We want to study the Trinity because the great demonic trinity is about to surface and sweep the globe (**2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 2:2-4; Revelation 13:2-4, 11-12**).

## VII) What Are Some Major Doctrinal Errors Regarding the Trinity?

- A) Most negative doctrines regarding the Trinity spring from one of these truths being broken;
  - 1) There is one God.
  - 2) Father, Son and Holy Spirit are each fully God.
  - 3) God is three persons.
- B) What seems to happen is that one of these three points is stressed more than another, causing us to leave the whole for a part.
- C) Here are the three major errors from culture past and culture present regarding the Trinity.
  - 1) Modalism
    - (i) This false doctrine teaches that God is not three Persons but is One of them at a time, not separate in three different places at one time.
    - (ii) Modalism believes that God the Father was at Creation, the Cross, and the Upper Room playing the role of the Son and the Spirit.
    - (iii) Folks that adhere to this false teaching go under the name "Jesus Only." They represent millions of believers across the earth, but they deny the Biblical definition of the Trinity.
    - (iv) Jesus' baptism takes care of this error (**Matthew 3:16-17**).
  - 2) Arianism
    - (i) This false doctrine teaches that because God is one, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are not God, but of the highest created beings.
    - (ii) So although Christ was fully man, He was not fully God.

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(iii) Folks that adhere to this false teaching are the Jehovah's Witnesses, who deny the Trinity, and see Jesus as created and the Holy Spirit as some sort of cosmic force, but not God.

(iv) Thomas' encounter with the risen Christ takes care of this error ( **John 20:25-29**).

### 3) Tritheism (of Polytheism)

(i) This false doctrine teaches that the Father is an exalted man who became a god and that both Jesus and the Holy Spirit are spirit children from the father, which makes them unequal because both Jesus and the Holy Spirit are created, not uncreated.

(ii) Folks that adhere to this false teaching are the Mormon's, who deny the Trinity, and who see the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit as created beings and unequal.

(iii) John's account of creation takes care of this (**John 1:1-4**).

D) You might say, what's the big deal? Well the three groups that we just mentioned, Jesus only (United Pentecostal Church International UPCI), Jehovah's Witnesses and the Mormons represent **35,175,501** from between 2008-2011.

## **VIII) What Are Some Practical Applications of the Trinity?**

### A) Trinitarian life is humble.

1) When we look into the mystery of God, we see His depth and it causes us to be humbled. Though we can know God truly, we can't know God fully. We're talking about God.

### B) Trinitarian life is loving.

1) We love God, love ourselves, love one another, love our neighbors, love strangers and even love our enemies. Jesus became our neighbor and the stranger in our midst so that through Him we might come to know Him. We are called to do the same.

### C) Trinitarian life is worshipful.

1) This means we worship God through singing, serving, working and praying through the Holy Spirit, to the Father in the name of Jesus.

### D) Trinitarian life is relational.

1) This means that we live our life just like the Trinity. In loving, kind, patient, open and honest community with those around us. Do people know you? Are you kind? Are you open?

### E) Trinitarian life is unified and diverse.

1) This means that just like the Trinity is connected to one another, so also are we. We are called to live in unity with one another, while not losing our own personalities.

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F) Trinitarian life is submissive.

1) This means that we submit our lives first to Jesus Christ, to the Church leadership, to other Christians and to the other authority that is over us. Just like Jesus submitted Himself to the Father and even to other leaders in His day, so also do we.

G) Trinitarian relationships are relationships where nothing is hidden, nothing is lied about, nothing is done out of selfishness, nothing is done in secret and everything is done for God's glory and other's good.

H) If you're a Christian and you're not in relationship, you are choosing to live opposite of the Trinitarian God that you have given your life to.