

## *Discipleship Lesson 12*

# **The Trinity**

### *Key Memory Verse:*

*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, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*

*Matthew 28:19–20*



# Discipleship Lesson 12

## The Trinity

As you study this lesson you will understand why the following statements are **not true**.

1. There are three gods, not one.
2. Jesus Christ is only a son of God.
3. The doctrine of the Trinity is not supported by Scripture.

### Why Is the Trinity Important to a Christian?

It is safe to say that most Christians would be at a loss to explain the biblical doctrine of the Trinity. It is a concept universally rejected by cults (Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, etc.) and by the Jews.

### Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to clearly understand that both Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are completely equal to God the Father.

It is important to remember that our failure to comprehend all sides of a divinely stated truth does not mean that we should reject it as unacceptable. Those who believe in God are faced with many statements concerning His attributes, which are not fully understood. In some instances this is explained by the fact that as finite human beings we have no capacity to experience these attributes personally. For example, we cannot fully comprehend the truths that God is omnipresent, everywhere at the same time; omniscient, knowing all things; and omnipotent, all powerful, Almighty One, or His eternity—He has no beginning and no end. Nevertheless we accept them as true because we place our faith in what the Scripture says.

If it were possible to fully comprehend God, we would have succeeded in reducing Him to no more than a human being, or we would have elevated humanity to the position of deity.

## I. What the Word Trinity Does and Does Not Mean

- A. The word *trinity* means “three.” Today, many non-Christians assume that the doctrine of the Trinity means that Christians believe in three gods, not one. But this is not at all what we believe the Bible teaches.

Believing in the Trinity does not mean that God can be divided up into thirds, so to speak. To say that there are three persons in the Godhead has never been taken to mean that there are three separate people who are God or that God is a committee, as some cults teach that we believe.

- B. What we believe the Scriptures teach in both the Old and New Testaments is that God is One but at the same time He consists of three persons.

Here are two good definitions of the Trinity.

In the unity of the Godhead there are three persons of one substance, power, and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Within the nature of the one eternal God, there are three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

- C. Unlike some doctrines where good Bible teachers disagree, the doctrine of the Trinity must be embraced fully for a person to be a Christian.

When anyone teaches that Jesus or the Holy Spirit is not equal to the Father, he destroys the deity and perverts the true teaching of God’s Word.

To prove the deity of the Godhead you must only determine if the Bible teaches that Jesus and the Holy Spirit are both God. Are they both described as separate persons, and are the divine attributes of God ascribed to them?

## Notes and Questions

## II. God the Father

### A. The personality of God.

1. True Christianity may be defined as the communion between two persons: God and man. Christianity is a personal relationship between God in heaven and man on the earth. Man can have no communion with an influence, a force, or an impersonal something, nor can an influence have any moving or affection toward man.
2. God identified Himself in Exodus 3:14 as "*I Am Who I Am*." This name is wonderfully significant. Its central idea is that of eternal existence and personality. The words signify "*I Am, I Was, I Shall Be*."

3. All the names given to God in the Scriptures denote personality. Here are some of them:

Jehovah-Jireh; the Lord will provide—Genesis 22:13–14

Jehovah-Rapha; the Lord that heals—Exodus 15:26

Jehovah-Nissi; the Lord our banner—Exodus 17:8–15

Jehovah-Shalom; the Lord our peace—Judges 6:24

Jehovah-Ra-ha; the Lord my shepherd—Psalm 23:1

Jehovah-Tsidkenu; the Lord our righteousness—Jeremiah 23:6

Jehovah-Shammah; the Lord is present—Ezekiel 48:35

Moreover, the personal pronouns ascribed to God prove personality. All through the Scriptures, names and personal pronouns are ascribed to God that undeniably prove that God is a person.

4. A sharp distinction is drawn in Scripture between the gods of the heathen and the Lord God of Israel.

What is the distinction? See Jeremiah 10:10–16.

**B. The natural attributes of God.**

1. The omniscience of God—He knows all things and is absolutely perfect in knowledge (Psalm 139:2–3, 147:4–5; 1 John 3:20; Romans 11:33; Proverbs 15:3).
2. The omnipotence of God—He can bring to pass everything that He wills. God's power has no boundaries or limitations (Job 42:2; Genesis 1:1–3; Daniel 4:35; Genesis 18:14).
3. The omnipresence of God—He is everywhere present. This does not mean that God is everywhere present in a bodily sense. His presence is a spiritual and not a material presence. Yet it is a real presence (Jeremiah 23:23–24; Psalm 139:7–12; Acts 17:24–28).
4. The eternity and immutability of God—He is without beginning or end, without bounds or dimension, without past or future. He is absolutely unchangeable and thus He is self-existent (Habakkuk 1:12; Revelation 1:8; Malachi 3:6; James 1:17).

**Did you look up and read all these verses?**

**Which two verses really stood out to you?**

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**C. The moral attributes of God.**

1. The holiness of God—Isaiah 57:15; Psalm 99:9
2. The righteousness and justice of God—Psalm 116:5; Ezra 9:15; Jeremiah 12:1
3. The mercy and loving-kindness of God—Romans 8:32; Psalm 103:8, 86:5, 15
4. The love of God—1 John 4:8, 16; John 3:16; Ephesians 2:4–5

**Did you look up and read all these verses?**

**Which two verses really stood out to you?**

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### III. God the Son

To accept the Trinity you must believe that Jesus is God and equal to God the Father in every way.

#### A. Is Jesus God or just a god?

1. John 1:1–5,14—Who is the “Word” in verse one?

\_\_\_\_\_ Note 1 John 1:1–2.

“In the beginning” parallels Genesis 1:1—Before the universe began, God the Son always existed. Note John 8:58 and Colossians 1:17.

“The Word was with God”—“The preposition *with* means ‘face to face,’ proving Jesus is not a concept or abstraction” (Dr. John MacArthur). You can only be face to face with a person.

“The Word was God”—The “Word” had all the essence or attributes of deity. Jesus was fully God. Note Colossians 2:9.

2. John 1:3 and Colossians 1:16 teach that Jesus was the \_\_\_\_\_.

How does this prove His deity?

3. What about John 14:28? Did Jesus think of Himself as less than God? How can the Father be greater if Jesus is equal to God?

Solution: The Father is greater than the Son by office, but not by nature, since both are God. Just as an earthly father is equally human with, but holds a higher office, than his son, even so the Father and the Son in the Trinity are equal in essence, but different in function. In like manner, we speak of the president of our country as being a greater man, not by virtue of his character, but by virtue of his position. Therefore, Jesus cannot ever be said to say that He considered Himself anything less than God by nature.

4. Jesus claimed to be God. In John 10:30–38 His Jewish hearers were fully aware of what He was saying. Note verse 33 and Jesus’s response in verse 36–38, again claiming to be God.

5. Jesus also claimed that He should be honored as God. Note John 5:23. The Jews listening knew that no one should claim to be equal with God in this way, and again they sought to kill Him (John 5:18).
6. **The greatest evidence supporting Jesus's claim to be God is found in His resurrection.** Nothing like it is claimed by any other religion, and no miracle has as much historical evidence to confirm it. Jesus Christ rose from the dead to a transformed body on the third day after His death. In this resurrected state, He appeared to more than five hundred of His disciples on at least eight different occasions over a forty-day period. He conversed with them, ate with them, let them touch Him, and cooked breakfast for them. The fact that both the Old Testament and Jesus Himself predicted that He would rise from the dead makes this miracle even stronger in its significance. When dealing with people who refused to believe, in spite of His miracles, Jesus rested the case for His deity on His resurrection alone.
7. Jesus claimed to be Yahweh God in several direct and indirect ways and gave three lines of evidence to support this claim: fulfillment of prophecy, a sinless and miraculous life, and His resurrection. Inasmuch as there is solid historical evidence to confirm each of these claims, there is no escaping the conclusion that Jesus's claim to be God is true. It is confirmed by reliable historical evidence from eyewitnesses and by God through the miracles performed.

C.S. Lewis, who was a professor at Cambridge University and once an agnostic, wrote, "I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him. 'I am ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God.' This is one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man, and said the sort of things that Jesus said, would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic, on the level with a man who says he is a poached egg, or else he would be the devil of hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God; or else a madman or something worse."

## Notes and Questions

## Notes and Questions:

A person cannot be a true Christian and not accept Jesus's deity. If you have more questions about this subject, please ask your pastor.

**Did you look up and read all the verses in Section III?**

Which two passages helped you understand Jesus's deity best?

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### IV. God the Holy Spirit

A. Is the Holy Spirit a *person*?

1. The Holy Spirit is distinctively referred to over two hundred times in the New Testament.

We learn from Scripture that the Holy Spirit is a distinct *person* when we hear that it was He who personally called and guided certain individuals to certain mission fields in the church's infancy (Acts 8:29, 10:19–20, 13:2; 20:28, 16:6–7, 9). The Holy Spirit, we further learn, can be lied to (Acts 5:3), blasphemed against (Matthew 12:31–32), tested (Acts 5:9), resisted (Acts 7:51; 1 Thessalonians 5:19), and grieved (Ephesians 4:30), things that obviously could only be said about a “person.”

2. These are all activities that clearly presuppose that the Holy Spirit is to be thought of as something like a conscious feeling, and willing agent—a *person*.

B. Is the Holy Spirit God?

All four of the distinctively divine attributes are ascribed to the Holy Spirit in God's Word.

For instance, read:

1. Omnipresence—Psalm 139:7–10
2. Omniscience—1 Corinthians 2:10–11; John 14:26, 16:12–13
3. Omnipotence—Luke 1:35
4. Eternity—Hebrews 9:14



- C. The Holy Spirit is called God (Acts 5:3–4).
- D. The distinction of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son is seen in Luke 3:21–22, Matthew 28:19, John 14:16, and Acts 2:33.

To sum it all up, again and again the Bible draws the clearest possible distinction between the three Persons—the Holy Spirit, the Father, and the Son. They are three separate personalities, having mutual relations to one another, acting upon one another, speaking of or to one another, applying the pronouns of a second and third person to one another.

The purpose of this lesson is to prove the deity of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. It is also important to understand the work of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

## V. Practical Application

- A. What part of this lesson helped you to best understand the doctrine of the Trinity?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- B. In your own words, define the Trinity.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- C. Why is the doctrine of the Trinity important?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- D. Name two important truths or principles that stood out to you from this lesson.
  - 1. \_\_\_\_\_
  - 2. \_\_\_\_\_

## Notes and Questions:

