

The Tri-unity of God (Trinity)

“For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.” (1 John 5:7)

The doctrine of the Trinity is a doctrine revealed in God’s Word, necessary to our faith, and oft disputed. The word trinity simply means, tri-unity or three-in-one. We have previously studied the oneness of God, as there is one God who is indivisible. This one God is three persons in one being. Our text above teaches the one true God exists as Father, Word, and Holy Ghost.

We often speak of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as the three persons of the Godhead. This makes it necessary to define the words Godhead and person. Godhead simply speaks of godhood or the nature and existence of God. When we speak of the three persons of the Godhead, we are declaring that, in the one being God, there who are three distinct yet equal. The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are not divided but are one even in their being. One is no less God than the other and none is more Divine than another. While they are one, the Father is not the Son, nor the Son the Spirit, nor the Spirit the Father: the three are distinct yet one. This is impossible to understand and must be received by faith, as God can be known but not comprehended. God fills the universe and exceeds its bounds and can only be known as He reveals Himself to us. Should anyone be able to comprehend God, he would be greater than God; and that is impossible.

The Three Persons Are Each Called God

The Father is God. Notice how God is called the Father of Jesus, the only begotten Son: *“No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.”* (John 1:18) In John 5:18, Jesus referred to God as His Father, spoke of Him in John 6:27,45,46, and explicitly called God Father in John 8:42,54, and 10:46. The apostle Peter also spoke of God the Father, saying concerning Jesus’ resurrection, *“Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.”* (Acts 2:33) Above thirty times, Scripture testifies to the Godhood of the Father in the Pauline Epistles (Romans through Hebrews). James, Peter, John, and Jude, in their epistles, speak of God the Father nine times. Finally, in the Revelation, we read, *“Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”* (Revelation 1:5–6) Because of His preeminent place in recognition and work, we call Him the Father. It does not speak of the Son or the Spirit having beginnings and originating from the Father but rather speaks of the relationships within the Godhead.

The Son is God. One of the most familiar verses read around Christmas time tells us the Son is God and equal to the Father: *“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”* (Isaiah 9:6) Gabriel told Mary the child she bore would be called the Son of the Highest, the very Son of God (Luke 1:32,35), which is the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah chapter nine. The very name given to Jesus, Emmanuel, means “God with us.” (Matthew 1:22-23). Jesus proved His Godhood by forgiving and healing a man crippled with palsy (Matthew 9:1-8). Jesus declared His Godhood by stating He was the Creator who is Lord of the Sabbath day (Mark 2:28). Jesus declared Himself to be omnipresent (present everywhere), seated at the right hand of the Father while standing on Earth, which omnipresence is an attribute of God alone, and called Himself the only begotten Son (John 1:18). This shows us that the Son is God. *“For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.”* (John 3:17) In fulfillment of the

prophecy in Isaiah 9:6, Jesus the Son said He was sent from the Father and thus He is God. In John 5:17-18, Jesus speaks of Himself as the Son of God with God as His Father, and the Jews understood Him to claim equality to the Father in Godhood. Philippians 2:5-8 teaches us Christ Jesus, whom we know is the Son of God, was equal with God before He became a man, and He retains that equality to this day; so we understand from this that the Son is God. Both Colossians 1:13-19 and Hebrews 1:1-6 teach us the Son is the Creator and thus, God. In 1 John 1:1-3, Jesus is called the Word of life, eternal, and equal to the Father, again showing to us the Godhood of the Son.

The Spirit is God. Just as the Father and the Son are God, the Spirit is God. He is spoken of in Scripture as being the Creator, just as the Father and the Son. *“Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth.”* (Psalm 104:30) (See also Genesis 1:1-2; Job 33:4). *“The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.”* (2 Samuel 23:2-3) David said the Spirit spoke by Him, which was God speaking; thus we recognize the Spirit is God. The Psalmist also equated the Spirit to God by saying, *“Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?”* (Psalm 139:7) The prophet Isaiah also implied the Divinity of the Spirit by saying, *“As a beast goeth down into the valley, the Spirit of the LORD caused him to rest: so didst thou lead thy people, to make thyself a glorious name.”* (Isaiah 63:14) Notice how Scripture speaks of the Spirit of the LORD and then spoke to God of His personally leading Israel, thus declaring the Deity of the Spirit who is the LORD who led His people. Jesus also taught the Divinity of the Spirit when He said, *“If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.”* (John 14:15-18) This shows us the Spirit who abides with God’s people forever is equal to the Son because Jesus said the coming of the Spirit would be His own coming to us. The Son is God and the Spirit is equal to the Son, therefore the Spirit is God. Finally, we can also see this in the Acts where Peter declared that the couple who lied to the Holy Ghost lied to God (Acts 5:1-5).

The Trinity Is A Trinity of Persons And Not of Modes or Manifestations

It is necessary to our study to establish the fact of the Trinity being a Tri-unity of persons in the Godhead rather than three different manifestations or modes of God.

First of all, let us notice the text Jesus used in one of His first sermons: *“The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.”* (Isaiah 61:1 cf Luke 4:14-21) We can readily see the Spirit of God, the Son of God, and the Lord who gave the Spirit to the Son. All three of these persons were active at once in this text, thus ruling out the three persons being mere modes in which God manifests Himself at different times.

We can see this even more clearly at the baptism of Jesus. *“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: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”* (Matthew 3:16-17) This text is strong proof of the Trinity because the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are in the same place at the same time. The persons of the Trinity simply cannot possibly be mere modes of Divine

manifestation or different manners in which God works. The three are one being, while the distinct persons exist and work together simultaneously.

Jesus' prayers also show us the plurality of persons in the God. After all, how can one pray to another who is simply a manifestation or mode of God who does not show up at the same time or in the same place as the others? Jesus prayed to the Father while in the Garden of Gethsemane. John chapter seventeen is a long prayer of Jesus to His Father. Even if the argument is made that Jesus was praying to the Father as a man and not as God, we cannot separate the deity of Christ from His humanity as if the Son of God left the fleshly Christ to ascend into Heaven and hear the prayer of the Son. It is impossible Jesus was praying to anyone other than one who is a Divine person ever distinct from Himself, though one with Him.

A similar argument can be made from Jesus' teaching regarding the sending of the Spirit. *"If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you."* (John 14:15–18) For the Son to pray to the Father and the Father to send the Spirit, the three persons would necessarily be existent and present simultaneously rather than differing modes or manifestations of God; and the three persons are quite obviously portrayed here as being present simultaneously.

We also read of the Spirit as being the Spirit, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, and the Spirit of Him that raised up Christ from the dead. *"But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you."* (Romans 8:9–11) Scripture teaches Christ ascended to the right hand of the Father, which shows us the Father and the Son as both being present in the same place at the same time, which rules out the modal or manifestation idea. The Spirit is ever present within the children of God, according to the promise of John 14:15: *"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever."* (John 14:16) It would be impossible for the Spirit to be with us forever if He had to leave at times to manifest Himself as the Father or the Son. Furthermore, verses nine and ten speak of the Spirit as Christ in us, as well as being the Spirit of the Divine Father who raised up Christ from the dead. Again, in all these things, the various persons of the Trinity necessarily exist, work, and manifest themselves simultaneously. This proves the persons of the Trinity are not various modes or manifestations of the same person. The three persons exist as the one true God while always existing as three persons. This is why we read, *"For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one."* (1 John 5:7)

The Scriptures' witness to the creation also testifies to the Tri-unity of God, as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were all simultaneously active in Creation. God sent for His Spirit to do creative work (Psalm 104:30), and one simply does not send Himself but another. Likewise, we read, *"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds."* (Hebrews 1:1–2) God not only speaks through His Son, but he made the worlds by the Son and both were active at the same time. These texts show us once again the Trinity of persons in the Godhead, as the three are one in being and will as well

as all three persons working together at the same time, which is something modes or manifestations of God cannot or would not do.

Practical Implications of This Doctrine

- We should be inspired to humbly and repentantly worship the One Who is so immense, incomprehensible, and glorious in His Triune greatness. *Psalm 145:3; Isaiah 6:1-8*
- We have the great assurance and security because the Father sent the Son, the Son gave His life, the Father raised up Christ from the dead, the Son ascended to the Father and prayed, so the Father sent the Holy Ghost to be in and with us forever; and the Son ever lives to make intercession for us, while the Holy Spirit also intercedes for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. (John 3:16-17; 14:15-18; Romans 8:26-27; 2 Corinthians 4:14; Hebrews 7:25-26)
- We know the Father accepts our service and worship through the Son and Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:16; Ephesians 2:18-22; 1 Peter 2:4-5).
- We can be assured of the eternal presence of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit with us. (Matthew 28:20; John 14:15-18; Hebrews 13:5-6)