

What do Christians Believe about the Trinity?

NOTES

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Matthew 3:1,2,11-17- The baptism of Jesus

The moment Jesus, the Son of God, *“came up out of the water, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on him. And a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy’”* (Matthew 3:16-17)

“There it was—an earthshaking phenomenon for all to see and hear. Three distinct persons of the Godhead made their presence known: God the Son being baptized, God the Father voicing pleasure in his Son, and God the Holy Spirit settling, like a dove, on the Son. Thus we are introduced in a highly dramatic way to the three persons of God that we call the Trinity.” (McDowell, Josh (2010-10-12). *The Unshakable Truth* (p. 313). Harvest House Publishers. Kindle Edition. The ideas for this sermon series are taken from this book)

The Trinity has existed eternally. Scripture records that all three of the persons of God were involved in creation.

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth...And the Spirit of God was hovering over its surface” (Genesis 1:1-2).

“In the beginning the Word already existed. He was with God, and he was God...He created everything there is. Nothing exists that he didn’t make...So the Word became human and lived here on earth among us” (John 1:1-3,14).

“Then God said, ‘Let us make people in our image’” (Genesis 1:26).

The question naturally arises, “Does the existence of the Trinity mean there are three different Gods? Or, is there one God who shows himself in three different roles or relationships—sometimes as a father, sometimes as a son, and at other times as the Holy Spirit?”

No to both questions!

Instead, **God exists as three persons, yet he is still one being**. Christians have taught this doctrine of the Trinity from the first century on and our church councils of Nicea and Chalcedon had to deal with heresies that arose around this subject. These councils affirmed that Scripture clearly teaches that our God is one God in three persons. God Is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

Jesus is the divine Son of God. And on the basis of that declaration the Jewish leaders plotted to kill him. They said he had, *“spoken of God as his Father, thereby making himself equal with God”* (John 5:18).

Paul the apostle declared Jesus to be deity: *“Christ himself was a Jew as far as his human nature is concerned. And he is God, who rules over everything and is worthy of eternal praise!”* (Romans 9:5).

The writer of Hebrews says, *“The Son reflects God’s own glory, and everything about him represents God exactly”* (Hebrews 1:3).

God the Father co-exists with God the Son. *“Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before God made anything at all and is supreme over all creation. Christ is the one through whom God created everything in heaven and earth...He existed before everything else began, and he holds all creation together”* (Colossians 1:15-17).

The apostle Paul refers to both the Father and Jesus as God. *“It is by the command of God our Savior that I have been trusted to do this work for him...May God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior give you grace and peace”* (Titus 1:3-4).

Jesus himself referred many times to his Father God as a person. He said he was with his Father—before he was born a man (John 8:38). He said this person—his Father—sent him into the world (John 17:18). He said there were many rooms in his Father’s house (John 14:2). He prayed to his Father (John 17:1).

God the Holy Spirit is also deity. *Jesus said, “I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor...the Holy Spirit, who will lead you into all truth...When the Father sends the Counselor as my representative—and by the Counselor I mean the Holy Spirit—he will teach you everything”* (John 14:16,26).

Jesus said, *“When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own, but will tell you what he has heard. He will tell you about the future. He will bring me glory by telling you whatever he receives from me. All that belongs to the Father is mine; this is why I said, ‘The Spirit will tell you whatever he receives from me’”* (John 16:13-15 NLT).

Jesus also referred to all three persons of the Trinity when he told his followers to make disciples, *“baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit”* (Matthew 28:19). Paul said, *“When you believed in Christ, he identified you as his own by giving you the Holy Spirit whom he promised long ago”* (Ephesians 1:13).

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the triune Godhead.
He is one God in three persons interacting with each other and with us.

Two illustrations, imperfect yet helpful

1. the chemical combination H₂O can be a liquid (water), a solid (ice), or a gas (steam). Yet in each of these forms the chemical substance is one and the same. If you put an ice cube in a beaker and heat it, you will see a solid melting into liquid and then rising into a gas. As this operation is in process, you will have all three states of the H₂O chemical co-existing
2. Length, width, and height are three distinct dimensions that define a specific volume of space... like a cube. The cube exists as a single entity because the dimensions of length, width, and height combine equally to form it. Each dimension is unique yet must unite as one to maintain the essence of a cube.

God exists as one in three persons. Each person shares equally in the one essence and nature of the Godhead. All three—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—unite to form one unique substance.

But perhaps the easiest way to understand the Trinity is in the way believers experience him at work in our lives...

Father... creating, loving, providing

Son... saving, forgiving, teaching

Holy Spirit... nudging us to action, whispering hope, ministering comfort, providing power and strength and leadership.