

# The Trinity

## The Doctrine of One God in Three Persons

An expansive theological study of the Trinity - the doctrine that God eternally exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three distinct Persons sharing one divine essence.

## The One God in Three Persons

### The Unity of the Godhead — One God, One Divine Essence

The foundational truth of biblical monotheism declares that there is one and only one God. This is the Shema of Israel, the creed recited daily by devout Jews: 'Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD.' Yet this unity is not mere mathematical singularity but a rich, complex unity—the Hebrew word 'echad' can denote a composite unity (as in 'one flesh' of husband and wife). The New Testament affirms this monotheism while revealing that within the one divine essence exist three distinct persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—each fully and equally God, yet not three Gods but one. This mystery transcends human comprehension yet is consistently revealed throughout Scripture.

#### **Deuteronomy 6:4**

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD.

#### **Isaiah 45:5**

I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me.

#### **1 Corinthians 8:4**

We know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one.

#### **James 2:19**

Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

#### **1 Timothy 2:5**

For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

**Mark 12:29**

And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord.

**The Three Persons Distinguished — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit**

While affirming one God, Scripture clearly distinguishes three persons within the Godhead. The Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Spirit, and the Spirit is not the Father—yet each is fully God. These distinctions are not modes or manifestations that God assumes at different times (modalism), nor are they three separate beings (tritheism). Rather, they are eternal, personal distinctions within the one divine being. The Father eternally begets the Son, the Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father (and the Son, in Western theology), yet none is before or after another in time or dignity. This tri-personal existence is essential to God's nature as love—for love requires an object, and God has loved within Himself from all eternity.

**Matthew 28:19**

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

**2 Corinthians 13:14**

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.

**1 Peter 1:2**

Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.

**John 14:26**

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

**John 15:26**

But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.

**Galatians 4:6**

And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

## Trinitarian Theophanies — The Trinity Revealed in the Old Testament

Though the full revelation of the Trinity awaited the New Testament, the Old Testament contains profound hints of plurality within the Godhead. God speaks of Himself in the plural ('Let us make man in our image'), the Angel of the LORD appears as God Himself yet distinct from God, and the Spirit of God operates distinctly from YHWH. The Shema's use of 'echad' (composite unity) rather than 'yachid' (absolute singularity) allows for this plurality. These passages, read in the light of New Testament revelation, show that the Trinity was not an innovation but the fuller unveiling of what was always true about God's nature.

### **Genesis 1:26**

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.

### **Genesis 3:22**

And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil.

### **Genesis 11:7**

Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.

### **Isaiah 6:8**

Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.

### **Genesis 18:1-2**

And the LORD appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre... he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him.

### **Genesis 19:24**

Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven.

## God the Father

### The Father as Source and Origin — The Unbegotten Father

Within the Trinity, the Father holds a certain primacy—not of time, essence, or dignity, but of order and origin. He is the 'fount of deity' (fons divinitatis), the unbegotten source from whom the Son is eternally begotten and from whom the

Spirit eternally proceeds. This does not make the Father 'more God' than the Son or Spirit, for all three share the identical divine essence. Rather, it speaks to the eternal relations of origin within the Godhead. The Father initiates, sends, and gives; the Son is sent and reveals the Father; the Spirit proceeds and applies. This order reflects the inner life of God from all eternity.

**John 5:26**

For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.

**1 Corinthians 8:6**

But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.

**Ephesians 4:6**

One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

**John 1:14**

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

**John 6:57**

As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.

**1 John 4:14**

And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.

## The Father's Love — The God Who Loves

The Father is revealed supremely as the God of love—love that existed within the Trinity before creation, love that moved Him to create, and love that sent His Son for redemption. The Father's love is not mere sentiment but active, sacrificial, electing grace. He loved the Son before the foundation of the world, and He set His love upon His elect people in eternity past. This love reaches its apex at Calvary, where the Father gave His only begotten Son. Such love is the very essence of God's character, for 'God is love,' and this love flows eternally between the persons of the Trinity and overflows to creation.

**John 3:16**

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

**1 John 4:8**

He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

**1 John 4:9-10**

In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

**John 17:24**

Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

**Romans 5:8**

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

**Ephesians 2:4-5**

But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ.

## The Father of Believers — Adoption into the Family of God

One of the supreme privileges of salvation is adoption into God's family, whereby believers receive the right to call the Almighty 'Father.' This is no natural relationship—by nature all are children of wrath—but a gracious adoption accomplished through union with Christ, the natural Son. Through the Son's redemptive work and the Spirit's regenerating power, believers are brought into the Father's household, made heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirits that we are children of God, enabling us to cry 'Abba, Father' with the same intimacy Jesus displayed.

**Romans 8:15**

For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

**Galatians 4:4-5**

But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

**John 1:12**

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.

**1 John 3:1**

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.

**Romans 8:16-17**

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.

**Matthew 6:9**

After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

## God the Son

### The Eternal Son — Begotten, Not Made

The Son of God is not a created being but eternally begotten of the Father—a distinction the Nicene Creed articulates as 'begotten, not made, of one substance with the Father.' This eternal generation means the Son has always existed as Son; there was never a time when He was not. He is the 'only begotten' (monogenes) in the unique sense of sharing the Father's very nature. As the Logos (Word), He is the Father's perfect self-expression from all eternity. The Son is God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God—fully sharing the divine essence while remaining a distinct person within the Trinity.

**John 1:1-3**

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

**John 1:14**

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

**John 1:18**

No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

**Colossians 1:15-17**

Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created... all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

**Hebrews 1:3**

Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power.

**Micah 5:2**

But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah... out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

## The Deity of Christ — True God and True Man

Jesus Christ is not merely a great teacher, prophet, or even the highest created being—He is God incarnate, the second person of the Trinity clothed in human flesh. Scripture ascribes to Him every divine attribute: eternity, omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, immutability. He receives worship, forgives sins, and claims equality with the Father. Thomas's confession 'My Lord and my God' represents the proper response to the risen Christ. The deity of Christ is not an optional doctrine but the foundation upon which Christianity stands—if Christ is not God, His sacrifice cannot atone for sins, and Christianity collapses.

**John 20:28**

And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.

**Titus 2:13**

Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

**Hebrews 1:8**

But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.

**John 10:30**

I and my Father are one.

**Philippians 2:6**

Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.

**Colossians 2:9**

For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

**Romans 9:5**

Of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.

**1 John 5:20**

And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.

## The Son as Mediator — The One Mediator Between God and Men

As the God-man, Jesus Christ uniquely qualifies to mediate between holy God and sinful humanity. He must be God to satisfy divine justice and represent the infinite value required for atonement. He must be man to represent humanity, bear human guilt, and die in humanity's place. In His one person, two complete natures—divine and human—are united without confusion, change, division, or separation (as Chalcedon declared). This hypostatic union enables Christ to bridge the infinite chasm between Creator and creature, bringing God to man and man to God. He is the ladder Jacob saw, connecting heaven and earth.

**1 Timothy 2:5**

For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

**Hebrews 8:6**

But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.

**Hebrews 9:15**

And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

**Hebrews 12:24**

And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.



**John 14:6**

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

**John 1:51**

And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.

## God the Holy Spirit

### The Personality of the Spirit — The Third Person, Not a Force

The Holy Spirit is not an impersonal force, influence, or energy but a divine person possessing intellect, will, and emotions. He can be lied to, grieved, blasphemed, and resisted—responses impossible toward a mere power. He speaks, teaches, guides, intercedes, and makes decisions ('it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us'). Christ referred to Him with personal pronouns ('He,' 'Him') even when the grammatical gender of 'Spirit' (pneuma) is neuter. The Spirit's personhood is essential to understanding His work—He does not merely empower believers mechanically but personally indwells, teaches, comforts, and sanctifies them.

**Acts 5:3-4**

But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost... thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.

**Ephesians 4:30**

And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

**Acts 13:2**

As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

**Romans 8:26-27**

Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

**John 16:13**

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

**Acts 15:28**

For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things.

## The Deity of the Spirit — The Spirit Who Is God

The Holy Spirit is not a lesser deity or created being but fully God, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and Son. Scripture directly identifies Him as God (Acts 5:3-4), attributes divine perfections to Him (omnipresence, omniscience, eternality), credits Him with divine works (creation, inspiration, regeneration), and places Him alongside the Father and Son in the Trinitarian formula. Blaspheming the Spirit is the unforgivable sin—not because the Spirit is greater than the Father or Son, but because rejecting His testimony to Christ leaves no avenue for forgiveness. The Spirit is the Lord, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

**Acts 5:3-4**

But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost... thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.

**2 Corinthians 3:17**

Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

**Psalms 139:7-8**

Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.

**1 Corinthians 2:10-11**

But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

**Hebrews 9:14**

How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

**Matthew 12:31-32**

Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.

**The Procession of the Spirit — The Spirit Who Proceeds**

As the Son is eternally begotten of the Father, so the Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father (and, according to Western theology, from the Son as well—the filioque). This procession is not a temporal event but an eternal relation, defining the Spirit's personal mode of subsistence within the Trinity. The Spirit is sent by both Father and Son in the economy of redemption, reflecting this eternal procession. He is called both 'the Spirit of God' and 'the Spirit of Christ,' belonging equally to both. The Spirit does not speak of Himself but glorifies Christ, even as Christ glorifies the Father—a beautiful mutual glorification within the Trinity.

**John 15:26**

But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.

**John 14:26**

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things.

**Galatians 4:6**

And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

**Romans 8:9**

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.

**John 16:14**

He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

**Philippians 1:19**

For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

# The Trinity in Redemption

## The Father's Plan — Salvation Purposed by the Father

The triune God works harmoniously in redemption, with each person playing a distinct role. The Father is the architect of salvation, planning redemption before the foundation of the world. He chose a people for Himself, predestined them to adoption, and sent His Son as the appointed Redeemer. The Father's eternal decree set in motion the entire drama of redemption. He gave the Son a people to save, promising that none of them would be lost. This sovereign purpose originates in the Father's love and wisdom, ensuring that salvation is not a divine afterthought but the unfolding of an eternal plan.

### **Ephesians 1:3-5**

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.

### **1 Peter 1:20**

Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.

### **John 6:37**

All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

### **Acts 2:23**

Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.

### **Romans 8:29-30**

For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son... Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

## The Son's Accomplishment — Salvation Achieved by the Son

The Son executes the Father's redemptive plan through His incarnation, life, death, and resurrection. He accomplished what no creature could—perfect obedience to

God's law and substitutionary satisfaction of God's justice. The Son did not merely make salvation possible; He actually saved His people from their sins. His cry 'It is finished' declared the completion of redemption's work. All that the Father required, the Son provided; all that justice demanded, the Son paid. The atonement is not merely an offer extended but a purchase accomplished, securing every blessing for those the Father gave to the Son.

**John 19:30**

When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

**Hebrews 10:12**

But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God.

**1 Peter 2:24**

Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

**Romans 5:19**

For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

**Galatians 3:13**

Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.

**Hebrews 9:12**

Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

## The Spirit's Application — Salvation Applied by the Spirit

The Holy Spirit applies to individuals what the Son accomplished for them. He convicts of sin, regenerates dead hearts, grants faith and repentance, unites believers to Christ, sanctifies them progressively, and seals them for the day of redemption. Without the Spirit's work, Christ's objective atonement would benefit no one—the Spirit makes it subjectively effective. He takes what is Christ's and declares it to believers, opening blind eyes to see gospel glory. The same Spirit who hovered over creation's waters now hovers over spiritually dead souls, bringing forth new creation in Christ.

**John 16:8**

And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.

**Titus 3:5**

Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.

**1 Corinthians 12:13**

For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

**Romans 8:11**

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.

**Ephesians 1:13-14**

In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession.

**2 Thessalonians 2:13**

God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.

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