

Why Believe in Christianity [Christ] CLASS #2?

Review: A person is truly known only through self-disclosure. God, who alone knows Himself, must disclose Himself by His own initiative, in ways we can understand through **His revelation**. Christians believe this revelation (unveiling) happens:

- to a limited degree, in **nature** (General Revelation, Romans 1:19-21);
- more fully in a supernatural way, through the *Theo-pneustos* of the **Bible** (Special Revelation: 2 Timothy 3:15-16).
- ultimately through the physical incarnation of **Immanuel** = God with us, **in Jesus Christ** (Matthew 1:21-23; John 1:1-4, 14-18; Isaiah 9:5-7).

By these avenues, the infinite God has made Himself accessible to our finite minds.
He is there—and He is not silent.

Class #2: *Who is God?*

Tonight we explore the Christian belief in **GOD**.

An honest seeker after truth is someone who has doubts, but does not cherish his doubts more than he/she cherishes answers. If there is a God who reveals Himself, then a genuine seeker desires to move to the place where they *doubt God less and doubt their own doubts more*.

“Significantly, the Bible views the problem of a true knowledge of God as a moral dilemma rather than a noetic [purely intellectual] dilemma.” In other words, according to Scripture, our greatest challenge is not in *knowing* God **is God**, but in *yielding* to God **as God**. If God exists and has revealed Himself, then there are adequate answers for building faith. For example, in the whole arena of science and religion:

- *The Language of Science and Faith*: Francis Collins and Karl Giberson
- *The Language of God*: Francis Collins
- *New Proofs for the Existence of God*: Robert J. Spitzer
- *Signposts to God*: Peter Bussey
- *The Creator and the Cosmos*: Hugh Ross

DRCC Core Belief #2:

There is one eternal, holy God, infinite, personal and knowable, who has revealed Himself to us as the eternal community of the Trinity (tri-unity). Three distinct persons: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit—each of Whom possesses all the attributes of deity. God is the Source of all truth and worthy of our complete trust, worship and obedience.

Jesus and His apostles explicitly taught that Almighty God is One in purpose, power and essential qualities, yet three in persons = the Trinity. From the earliest chapters of the Old Testament, there are allusions to this. Three yet One.

In essential nature, attributes, purpose and power, they are eternally One—the *perfect* Common - Unity [Community]. But in personhood [identity] God is three: Co-eternal, Co-infinite, Co-equal

(attempts at analogies include St Patrick's clover; and Aquinas' water [one substance] in three forms: liquid, solid (ice) and gas (steam).

If this idea doesn't give our finite minds a headache, we haven't thought about it much!
But consider this:

The Trinity declares that the essence of God is relational. God is this eternal community of mutual love, respect and understanding—an eternal dance of relational intimacy. If this is so, then to become “more godly” [more like God] means to join the dance, to live in authentic community, in growing and loving relationships with others.

To be self-centered is to be static, stationary, desiring and demanding that others orbit around us. The inner life of the triune God is completely different, characterized not by self-centeredness, but by mutually self-giving love. The Bible says “God is love.” Love as God's foundational characteristic is not possible if in eternity, before creation, God existed in isolation. Love requires a relationship between distinct individuals.

But if God is three in Persons and one in purpose, then God is essentially and eternally, interpersonal love. And ‘heaven’ [eternal life] is entering into this life of joyful, self-giving love (not as, but) with God through our union with God in Jesus Christ. [consider the implications of this for why the Cross was “hell” or “damnation” for Jesus.]

Genesis 1:1-2

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

Genesis 1:26-27

Then God said, “Let Us make mankind in Our image, in Our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” So God created mankind in His own image, in the image of God He created them; male and female He created them.

Deuteronomy 6:4-5

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is One. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

[In the most selected World Religions text: *Religions of the World*, 13th Edition; by Lewis M. Hopfe, in the chapter on Judaism, Hopfe states the most frequently used name for God in the Old Testament, including the Shema of Deut. 6:4-5, is **Elohim** which is literally ‘**God** [singular]-**plural** [form].’ “The use of the plural here is a mystery. While it might be tempting to assume that at one point the patriarchs may have been polytheists, there is nothing in the narrative to indicate worship to any but the one God, so this term is used only in a singular sense.”

Revelation 4:8 [The Trisagon = thrice holy God]

Holy, holy, holy – is the LORD, God, Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.

John 1:1-4

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made. In Him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.

John 1:14, 18

The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. No one has ever seen God, but the **one and only Son, who is Himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father**, has made Him known.

John 10:30

I and the Father are One.

John 14:23, 25-26

Jesus replied, “Anyone who loves Me will obey My teaching. My Father will love them, and We will come to them and make Our home with them. All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”

Matthew 28:18-20

Then Jesus came to them and said: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

2 Corinthians 13:14

May the grace of the LORD Jesus Christ, the love of God [the Father], and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Ephesians 2:18, 21-22:

For through Him [Jesus] we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. In Him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in Him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit.

Hebrews 1:1-3

In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed Heir of all things, and through Whom also He made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of His Being

(Romans 8 portrays the interwoven work of the three distinct Persons of the Trinity. See also in Revelation: the issue of worshipping God alone [core command] and yet in Revelation 5:13-14 and 6:16-17 both worship and final judgment belong equally to God the Father and to the Lamb.)

The names given to us in the Bible for the three Persons of the Trinity is Their revelation of Their distinct roles or functions in the Divine Plan of salvation (***Their unique roles meet each aspect of our needs***):

- God the **FATHER**: “*God above us*” = Sovereign, Infinite, Transcendent
- God the **SON**: “*Immanuel = “God with us”*” = Savior, Incarnate, Immanent
- God the **HOLY SPIRIT**: “*God in us*” = Indwelling, Intimate, Sustainer

C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, p.140.

“In our self-giving, if anywhere, we touch a rhythm not only of all creation but of all being. For the Eternal Word also gives Himself in sacrifice. When He was crucified, He ‘did in the wild weather of His outlying province’ only what He had done at home in glory and gladness from before the foundation of the world [see John 17:5]. From the highest to the lowest, all exists to be abdicated, and by that abdication, it becomes more truly self. This is not a law from which we can escape. What is outside the system of self-giving love is simply and solely Hell, that fierce imprisonment in the self...Self-giving is absolute Reality.”

[See also Isaiah 55:8-9; Jeremiah 29:13; Romans 1:25; Colossians 2:9]