

SHEFFEY BIBLE COLLEGE — STUDENT HANDOUT

Course: Systematic Theology II

Instructor: _____

Chapter 14 — God in Three Persons: The Trinity

I. THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY DEFINED

Key Truth

The doctrine of the Trinity teaches that the one true God eternally exists as three distinct persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Definition of the Trinity

- God eternally exists as three persons.
- Each person is fully God.
- There is one God.

Key Scripture

- Deuteronomy 6:4

Notes:

II. THE TRINITY REVEALED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Key Truth

The Old Testament affirms one God while providing indications of plurality within the Godhead.

A. Plural Language Concerning God

- Genesis 1:26
- Genesis 3:22
- Genesis 11:7
- Isaiah 6:8

B. Distinct Persons Called God

- Psalm 45:6–7
- Psalm 110:1

C. The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament

- Isaiah 63:10

D. The Angel of the LORD

- Genesis 16:13
- Exodus 3:2–6
- Judges 6:11–14

Notes:

III. THE TRINITY REVEALED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Key Truth

The New Testament clearly reveals Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as distinct divine persons.

A. The Baptism of Christ

- Matthew 3:16–17

B. The Great Commission

- Matthew 28:19

C. Other Trinitarian Formulas

- 2 Corinthians 13:14
- 1 Peter 1:2

Notes:

IV. THREE FOUNDATIONAL TRUTHS OF THE TRINITY

Key Truth

Biblical Trinitarianism stands upon three truths that must all be affirmed together.

A. God Is Three Persons

B. Each Person Is Fully God

C. There Is One God

Key Scripture

- John 14:26
- 1 Timothy 2:5

Notes:

V. THE DEITY OF THE SON

Key Truth

Jesus Christ is fully and eternally God.

Proofs of Christ's Deity

- John 1:1
- John 20:28
- Colossians 2:9
- Isaiah 9:6
- Hebrews 1:10

Notes:

VI. THE DEITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Key Truth

The Holy Spirit possesses the attributes, works, and identity of God.

Proofs of the Spirit's Deity

- Acts 5:3–4
- Psalm 139:7–8
- 1 Corinthians 2:10–11
- John 3:5

Notes:

VII. WHY HUMAN ANALOGIES FAIL

Key Truth

No earthly illustration can adequately explain the Trinity.

Common Analogies

- Clover
- Tree
- Water
- One man with multiple roles

Why They Fail

- God is one being in three persons.
- Each person is fully God.
- No created analogy perfectly reflects God.

Notes:

VIII. HISTORICAL ERRORS CONCERNING THE TRINITY

Key Truth

Every major Trinitarian heresy results from denying one of the three foundational truths.

Modalism

- One person
- Three modes

Arianism

- Son created
- Not fully God

Adoptionism

- Jesus adopted as Son

Subordinationism

- Son inferior in being

Tritheism

- Three separate gods

Notes:

IX. THE NICENE CREED AND THE DEFENSE OF ORTHODOXY

Key Truth

The early church defended the full deity of Christ and preserved biblical orthodoxy.

Important Terms

- Council of Nicaea (325)
- Council of Constantinople (381)
- Athanasius
- Homoousios
- Homoiousios
- “Begotten, not made”

Notes:

X. THE FILIOQUE CONTROVERSY

Key Truth

The Filioque controversy centered on the eternal relationship of the Holy Spirit to the Father and the Son.

Important Concept

Filioque = “And the Son”

Historical Significance

- East-West division
- A.D. 1054

Notes:

XI. DISTINCT ROLES WITHIN THE TRINITY

Key Truth

The persons of the Trinity are equal in deity but distinct in function.

In Creation

- Father planned
- Son created
- Spirit sustained

In Redemption

- Father sent
- Son accomplished
- Spirit applies

Key Scriptures

- John 1:3
- Genesis 1:2
- John 3:16
- John 3:5

Notes:

XII. WHY THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY MATTERS

Key Truth

The Trinity is essential to the gospel itself.

The Trinity Protects

- The Atonement
- Justification
- Worship
- Prayer
- God's Independence
- Unity of Reality

Notes:

Discussion Questions

1. Why does denying any one of the three foundational truths of the Trinity inevitably produce doctrinal error?
2. Why is the doctrine of the Trinity essential to the gospel, worship, and salvation?

THINGS TO KNOW (EXAM REVIEW)

1. State the biblical definition of the Trinity.
2. Explain how the Trinity is progressively revealed in Scripture.
3. Explain the three foundational truths of Trinitarian doctrine.
4. Defend the deity of Jesus Christ from Scripture.
5. Defend the deity of the Holy Spirit from Scripture.
6. Explain why Scripture teaches there is one God.
7. Explain why human analogies ultimately fail to explain the Trinity.
8. Describe Modalism, Arianism, Adoptionism, Subordinationism, and Tritheism.
9. Explain the significance of the Nicene Creed and the term *homoousios*.
10. Explain the distinct roles of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in creation and redemption.

A question on the exam will ask if you completed the assigned reading.

Closing Summary

God eternally exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Each person is fully God, yet there is only one God. The Trinity is central to biblical Christianity and essential to understanding the gospel.

ASSIGNMENT

Read Chapter 14 — God in Three Persons: The Trinity.