

Calvary Chapel El Monte

Essentials of the Faith

Session 2 – The Triune God

***Hint in order to pass the quiz, review the highlighted portions.**

I. The Triune God (Trinity)

Augustine, while puzzling over the doctrine of the Trinity, was walking along the beach one day when he observed a young boy with a bucket, running back and forth to pour water into a little hole. Augustine asked, "What are you doing." The boy replied, "I'm trying to put the ocean into this hole." Then Augustine realized that he had been trying to put an infinite God into his finite mind.

The Doctrine of the Trinity, although incomprehensible to us, is Biblical and actual truth about God.

You will be asked to commit the following definition to memory:

The Trinity is defined as, "One God in three Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, all equal in essence and nature, but not in function and office."

NOT Polytheism, Arianism, or Modalism

Polytheism is the teaching that there are many Gods.

Arianism (named after its proponent, Arius of Alexandria) is the teaching that God the Father created God the Son; that although Jesus has **some** divine attributes, He has no divine essence, that Jesus is not God. Arianism was condemned as heresy in the council of Nicea on May 20, 335 A.D.

Modalism teaches that there is one God who appears in different forms or modes. That this one God appeared primarily as the Father in the Old Testament, as the Son from conception to Ascension, and as the Holy Spirit in the church age.

(For Further Study)

Got Questions on Arianism, *"Arianism is a heresy named for Arius, a priest and false teacher in the early fourth century AD in Alexandria, Egypt. One of the earliest and probably the most important item of debate among early Christians was the subject of Christ's deity. Was Jesus truly God in the flesh, or was Jesus a created being? Was Jesus God or not? Arius denied the deity of the Son of God, holding that Jesus was created by God as the first act of creation and that the nature of Christ was anomoios ("unlike") that of God the Father. Arianism, then, is the view that Jesus is a finite created being with some divine attributes, but He is not eternal and not divine in and of Himself.*

Arianism misunderstands biblical references to Jesus' being tired (John 4:6) and not knowing the date of His return (Matthew 24:36). It may be difficult to understand

how God could be tired or not know something, but these verses speak of Jesus' human nature. Jesus is fully God, but He is also fully human. The Son of God did not become a human being until a specific point of time we call the Incarnation. Therefore, Jesus' limitations as a human being have no impact on His divine nature or His eternity.

A second major misinterpretation in Arianism concerns the meaning of firstborn as applied to Christ. Romans 8:29 speaks of Christ as "the firstborn among many brothers and sisters" (see also Colossians 1:15–20). Arians understand firstborn in these verses to mean that the Son of God was "created" as the first act of creation. This is not the case. Jesus Himself proclaimed His self-existence and eternity (John 8:58; 10:30). In Bible times, the firstborn son of a family was held in great honor (Genesis 49:3; Exodus 11:5; 34:19; Numbers 3:40; Psalm 89:27; Jeremiah 31:9). It is in this sense that Jesus is God's "firstborn." Jesus is the preeminent Person in God's plan and the Heir of all things (Hebrews 1:2). Jesus is the "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6).

After nearly a century of debate at various early church councils, the Christian church officially denounced Arianism as a false doctrine. Since that time, Arianism has never been accepted as a viable doctrine of the Christian faith. Arianism has not died out, however. Arianism has continued through the centuries in varying forms. The Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons of today hold a very Arian-like position on Christ's nature. Following the example of the early church, we must denounce any and all attacks on the deity of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ."

Got Questions on Modalism, "Modalism and Monarchianism are two false views of the nature of God and of Jesus Christ that appeared in the second and third centuries AD. A modalist views God as one Person instead of three Persons and believes that the Father, Son, and Spirit are simply different modes or forms of the same divine Person. According to modalism, God can switch among three different manifestations. A Monarchian believes in the unity of God (the Latin word monarchia meant "single rule") to the point that he denies God's triune nature. Both modalism and Monarchianism inevitably hold to the doctrine of [Patripassianism](#), the teaching that God the Father suffered on the cross with (or as) the Son, and are closely related to [Sabellianism](#).

Monarchianism took two primary forms, Dynamic (or [Adoptionist](#)) Monarchianism and Modalistic Monarchianism. [Dynamic Monarchianism](#) started with an errant view of the nature of Jesus, specifically, that He was not God but was, at His baptism, empowered by God to do the wonders He did. Modalistic Monarchianism, on the other hand, took the modalistic view that Jesus was God, but only by virtue of the fact that Jesus was one of God's "manifestations." According to Monarchianism, the [Logos](#) of God has no separate, personal existence of its own. The biblical terms Father, Son, and Spirit are only different names for the same Person, according to the Monarchian.

Modalistic Monarchianism teaches that the unity of God is incompatible with a distinction of Persons within the Godhead. According to modalism, God has variously

manifested Himself as the Father (primarily in the Old Testament), as the Son (primarily from Jesus' conception to His ascension), and as the Holy Spirit (primarily after Jesus' ascension into heaven). Modalistic Monarchianism has its roots in the false teaching of Noetus of Smyrna around AD 190. Noetus called himself Moses and called his brother Aaron, and he taught that, if Jesus was God, then He must be the same as the Father. [Hippolytus of Rome](#) opposed this falsehood in his "Contra Noetum." An early form of Modalistic Monarchianism was also taught by a priest from Asia Minor named Praxeas, who traveled to Rome and Carthage about AD 206. [Tertullian](#) countered the teaching of Praxeas in "Adversus Praxean" around 213. Modalistic Monarchianism and its related heresies were also refuted by [Origen](#), [Dionysius of Alexandria](#), and the [Council of Nicea](#) in 325.

A form of Monarchianism still exists today in [Oneness Pentecostalism](#). In oneness theology, which is anti-Trinitarian, there are no distinctions among the Persons of the Godhead. Jesus is God, but He is also the Father and the Spirit. In a slight deviation from ancient modalism, Oneness Pentecostals teach that God is able to manifest Himself in all three "modes" simultaneously, such as at Jesus' baptism in [Luke 3:22](#).

The Bible presents God as one God ([Deuteronomy 6:4](#)), but then speaks of three Persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit ([Matthew 28:19](#)). How these two truths harmonize is inconceivable to the human mind. When we attempt to understand the inscrutable, we will always fail to varying degrees. But Scripture is plain: God exists in three co-eternal, co-equal Persons. Jesus prayed to His Father ([Luke 22:42](#)) and now sits on the right hand of the Father in heaven ([Hebrews 1:3](#)). The Father and the Son sent the Spirit into the world ([John 14:26](#); [15:26](#)). Modalism and the more specific Modalistic Monarchianism are theologically dangerous because they attack the very nature of God. Any teaching that does not acknowledge God as three distinct Persons is unbiblical."

Although the word "Trinity" is not found in the Bible, the teaching is implicitly and explicitly taught.

A. The Bible explicitly teaches that there is only one God (Deuteronomy 6:4; Mark 12:28-32; Romans 3:30; 1 Timothy 2:5; James 2:19).

***Deuteronomy 6:4-9** is the great "Shema." In Hebrew it means to "hear" which is the first word of the prayer, prayed daily in Jewish tradition.

The Shema is the centerpiece of the daily morning and evening prayer services and is considered by some the most essential prayer in all of Judaism. An affirmation of monotheism and majesty, its daily recitation is regarded by traditionally observant Jews as a biblical commandment.

The first verse of the Shema, from the sixth chapter of Deuteronomy, is among the best-known in all of Jewish liturgy. It is recited at the climactic moment of the final prayer of Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year, and traditionally as the last words before death. **Traditionally, it is recited with the hand placed over the eyes.**

Jewish tradition in time added Deuteronomy 11:13-29 and Numbers 15:37-41 to the Shema, claiming that these three prayers covered all features of the 10 Commandments.

B. The Bible explicitly teaches that the Father is God, Jesus is God, and the Holy Spirit is God.

1. The Father is God

Ephesians 4:6 (NKJV) "one God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all."

(See also Matthew 6:9; Malachi 2:10)

2. The Son is God (in reference to Jesus)

John 1:1 (NKJV) "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

John 1:14 (NKJV) "And the Word became 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."

(See also John 20:28; Acts 20:28; Isaiah 9:6; Matthew 1:23; John 8:58/Exodus 3:14; Hebrews 1:8-10)

If a person refuses to believe in the deity of Christ, that person will die in their sins (John 8:24).

3. The Holy Spirit is God

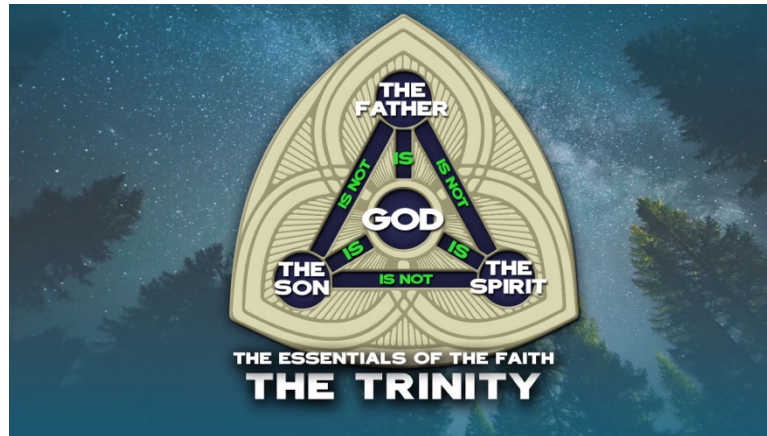
Acts 5:3-4 (NKJV) "But Peter said, 'Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to **lie to the Holy Spirit** and keep back *part* of the price of the land for yourself? ⁴ While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? **You have not lied to men but to God.**'"

The Holy Spirit is not an "it" or impersonal "force," but a Person, a "He" with a will (John 14:16; 16:13; Ephesians 4:30; 1 Corinthians 12:11)

Although we cannot possibly comprehend how God can be 3 Persons in 1 Being (for we are finite and God is infinite), we must keep in mind that we are not called to comprehend God, we are only called to submit to the revelation of Himself to us.

Incorrect: $1+1+1 = 3$

Correct: $1 \times 1 \times 1 = 1$



C. Implicit teachings of the Trinity:

1. In the Creation of man (Genesis 1:26)

Genesis 1:26a (NKJV) "Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness...'"

Who's God talking to? I can't be the angels, for we are not made in their image. We are made in the image of God only, and yet He refers to Himself in plurality as "us" and even converses within the Godhead (Genesis 1:26).

- We also see it in the different Hebrew words El=God singular; Elah=God dual; Elohim=God in plurality.

2. When God Calls Isaiah

Isaiah 6:8a (NKJV) "Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?'"

God refers to Himself in the plurality as "us" and converses within the Godhead.

3. In the Conception of Christ

Luke 1:35 (NKJV) "And the angel answered and said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.'"

4. In the Baptism of Christ

Luke 3:22 (NKJV) "And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, 'You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased.'"

5. In the Teaching of Christ about the Holy Spirit

John 14:16 (NKJV) "And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever--"

6. In the Great Commission

Matthew 28:19 (NKJV) "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,"

7. In Paul's closing to the Corinthians

2 Corinthians 13:14 (NKJV) "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit *be* with you all. Amen."

(See also Ephesians 4:4-6; Jude 1:20-21)

II. Attributes of God

There are many attributes (features, characteristics, qualities) of God; the following are a handful of God's attributes to spark your interest.

A. Communicable Attributes (those that human beings can also have)

God is:

1. Holy (Leviticus 11:44; 19:2; Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8)

Leviticus 19:2 (NKJV) "Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them: 'You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God *am* holy.'"

Isaiah 6:3 (NKJV) "And one cried to another and said: 'Holy, holy, holy *is* the Lord of hosts; the whole earth *is* full of His glory!'"

Revelation 4:8 (NKJV) "*The* four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!'"

In light of the fact that the word "holy" is repeated three times in succession, Bible teachers believe that God's holiness is His overriding attribute.

2. Loving (John 3:16; 1 John 4:8)

1 John 4:8 (NKJV) "He who does not love does not know God, for God is love."

ESV Study Bible, "John is not saying that God is only love (he has numerous other attributes), nor that love is God (a statement for which there is no scriptural support)."

3. Merciful (Exodus 34:6)

In Exodus 33 Moses asked God to show Himself to Moses. The problem is, if Moses saw God in His glory, Moses would have died, so God showed Moses His afterglow and revealed core qualities of Who He is.

Exodus 34:6 (NKJV) "And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth."

4. Gracious, longsuffering, abounding in goodness and truth (Exodus 34:6)

5. Just (Exodus 34:7)

Exodus 34:7 (NKJV) "keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, **by no means clearing *the guilty***, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation."

B. Non-Communicable Attributes (those that belong to God alone)

God is:

1. Omnipotent (All powerful) (Genesis 18:14; Job 42:2; Matthew 19:26)

2. Omnipresent (Everywhere present) (Psalm 139:7-12a)

3. Omniscient (All knowing) (Psalm 139:1-6)

4. Sovereign (Psalm 103:19; Romans 8:28)

God is the ultimate source of all power, authority, and everything that exists. There is absolutely nothing that happens in the universe that is outside of God's influence and authority.

"God's Sovereignty provides us with comfort. But God makes that promise, and millions throughout history have testified to its truth because God has proven His ability to back it up time and time again.

Think about the implications of that promise. Because God is sovereign and He loves you, nothing will ever come into your life that He does not either decree

or allow. Consequently, no matter what you face in life, you can take comfort in the fact that God is sovereign.”

5. Infinite and eternal (without beginning or end)

Deuteronomy 33:27 (NKJV) “The eternal God *is your* refuge, and underneath *are* the everlasting arms; He will thrust out the enemy from before you, and will say, ‘Destroy!’”

(See also Psalms 90:2; 147:5)

“What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.”

— A.W. Tozer

Click [HERE](#) to take the quiz, or copy and paste the link below into your browser.

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