

Doctrine of God (Part 2)

Our Triune God

The Trinity

- God eternally exists as one essence in three distinct persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.
- Each of the persons is truly God, yet there is only one God.

“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me.” - Exodus 20:2-3

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.” - Deut 6:4

Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me.” - Is. 43:10b

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” - Matt. 28:19

*“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”
- John 1:1*

“according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you.” - 1 Pet. 1:2

Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father All Governing, creator of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten from the Father before all time, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten not created, of the same essence as the Father, through Whom all things came into being; Who for us men and because of our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became human. He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried and rose on the third day, according to the Scriptures; and ascended to heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father, and will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead. His kingdom shall have no end.

And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and life-giver, **Who proceeds from the Father, Who is worshiped and glorified together with the Father and Son,** Who spoke through the prophets; and in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. We confess one baptism for the remission of sins. We look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Simplicity of God

- “God’s essence is without parts. There is no composition in God. All that is in God is God. Simplicity is true of each person in the Trinity, since each person is a subsistence of the divine essence. The persons are not “parts” that compose God, nor is one person a “portion” of another person.” - Matthew Barrett

Immanent and Economic (Relations and Missions)

- “The *economic* Trinity refers to God’s works ad extra, that is, what God has done outside himself in creation and redemption while the *immanent* Trinity denotes God’s relations ad intra, that is, his eternal intratrinitarian communion as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” - *A Theology for the Church*
- “God is eternally, internally Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. When the Triune God acts outside of himself, he acts in a way consistent with his being—from the Father, through the Son, by the power of the Holy Spirit.” - Christine Thornton

Common Heresies

- Modalism - The view that the Trinity is three different modes of God, or masks that God wears, at different times in salvation history.
- Subordinationism (Arianism) - The belief that the Son and the Spirit are agents of the Father, but they do not share in his essential oneness.
- Tritheism (Polytheism) - The belief that the three persons of the Trinity are separate beings (gods), who cooperate in perfect unity.

Problematic Analogies

- H₂O can be solid, liquid, and gas (modalism)
- One man is a son, father, husband/brother (modalism)
- 3 leaf clover or egg (partialism)
- The sun is a star that puts out light and heat (subordinationism)

The Trinity is Central to Our Faith

- The Trinity is central in the work of salvation – Eph. 1:3-14
- The Trinity is central in the mission of God – John 17:18
- The Trinity is central in the unity of the Church – John 17:20-26

Discussion Questions

Do you tend to view the Trinity as central to the Christian faith? Why might the Trinity not be a hindrance, but a help, in evangelism? What questions do you still have?