

The Biblical Doctrine of the Trinity

Lesson 2

The Unity of the Trinity



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The Biblical Doctrine of the Trinity

Lesson Two: The Unity of the Trinity

Discussion Forum

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INTRODUCTION

We saw in our last lesson that Christians are Trinitarian monotheists. We believe that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are three uncreated persons existing in essence as one uncreated Creator. We are distinct from polytheists who teach that there is more than one God. We are also distinct from Unitarian monotheists who teach that God the Father is the one and only uncreated person. But for Christians, the doctrine of the Trinity is so universally taught that sometimes we just accept it without knowing how to derive this doctrine from Scripture. So, learning how to identify the Trinity in Scripture can be a powerful tool for understanding our faith.

This is the second lesson in our study of *The Biblical Doctrine of the Trinity*, and we've entitled it "The Unity of the Trinity." In this lesson, we'll see how Scripture teaches that all three members of the Trinity are unified in one divine essence.

Question 1:

Why does the Trinity seem to be more clearly expressed in the New Testament than in the Old Testament?

As we know, the doctrine of the Trinity teaches that there is one God — one divine essence — and all three members of the Trinity are equally and fully God. However, this biblical truth is not fully and explicitly revealed in the Old Testament. Instead, much of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity comes from the New Testament. This truth doesn't mean that the Old Testament is wrong or inferior, but we should recognize that the Old Testament is incomplete revelation. God didn't reveal himself all at once. So, when we look for the unity of the Trinity in Scripture, it's helpful to start with a simple question: Why does the Trinity seem to be more clearly expressed in the New Testament than in the Old Testament?

Dr. Danny Akin

We need to acknowledge that the understanding of the triune God takes place through what we call “progressive revelation,” where God, throughout the canon of Scripture and moving into the New Testament, is progressively revealing more and more about who he is and how he functions, so that when you see, for example, the phrase in the Old Testament “the Spirit of God,” there’s no reason to try to make some type of radical disconnect between, say, God the Father. When you speak of the Spirit of God, you’re speaking of God. Now, yes, you’re speaking of the third person of the triune God that we come to know more fully in light of New Testament revelation, but you’re still talking just as much about God when you speak of him as the Spirit of God in the Old Testament as you are if you’re talking about the Father or the Son or, as it is more fully revealed in the New Testament, in triune passages like Matthew 28, the Great Commission text, or take Ephesians 4, in the first 6 verses. There are a number of places — the end of 2 Corinthians 13 — where you have all three brought together in a very clear package — that’s maybe not the best word, but it’ll work — but in the Old Testament it’s revealed in a different kind of a way.

Dr. Matt Carter

God throughout history has been moving progressively closer to us. In the Old Testament, God was other than us; he was above us. He spoke to us in pillars of clouds and in burning bushes, and he kind of spoke to us in that way, but there was a distance... But then in the New Testament era God took a step closer to us through Jesus, and not only was he other than us, but he dwelt among us. John tells us that the Word became flesh and dwelled among us. But then in the church era, God took a step even closer to that. The Scripture doesn’t say that God is other than us, above us like in the Old Testament, that he no longer dwells among us like in the New Testament era in Jesus, but now the Scripture says, through the Holy Spirit, that God has taken one step closer and he’s now in us. And the implications of that are unbelievable. We have the power of the living God that lives inside of us. We have the power of the resurrection of Jesus that lives inside of us. And I believe that if everyday believers could just get their minds around that, that Christianity is not only an identity that you walk in everyday but it’s a power that you possess, that’s inside of you. Over and over again, Jesus talked about the Helper that would come to us and allow us to do even greater things than he did when he was here on the earth and that’s staggering in its implications. And I would love to see in my own life and in the lives of just everyday believers them getting their minds around, the power of the resurrection of Jesus lives inside of me.

Dr. J. Scott Horrell

Really, in the Old Testament you have this, many times, this sense of God distinct from God. You have the *dabar*, the Word of God that goes forth and creates. You have the angel of the Lord who speaks as God sometimes, and other times — it's not clear at all — but frequently distinct from God. You have the Spirit of God who goes forth... But all of these are subtle kinds of influences that — when we go to the New Testament and we have the full revelation of Jesus Christ — begin to inform how then we read the Old Testament. Luke 24, I think, is remarkable. Jesus is talking with the two disciples on the way to Emmaus and he opens up the Scriptures. Their hearts burn within them as he explains to them what is taught of him, said of him in the Law and the Prophets and the Psalms... Now we see more clearly than ever. If that's true of the Son, it's also true of the Holy Spirit. Not as clearly because the New Testament is especially unfolding who is our Savior as now the eternal Son of God, but that's also true of the Holy Spirit as we see more and more a distinction of the Spirit in the New Testament. So, we have a canonical lens to understand not only the Father now, and the Son, but also the Holy Spirit. So, I take it that the Trinity — because it's the same God of the Old Testament as in the New Testament — is in fact the bedrock of all the Bible. And the Old Testament's under sand, under dirt a lot of times, and occasionally will come to the surface, but it is the New Testament that sheds light on the Old Testament as to how we might understand phrases like, "Let us create man in our own image." Now, was Moses thinking Trinity when he wrote passages like that? Almost certainly not. But at the same time, the Holy Spirit is the coauthor of Scripture, and so these subtleties in the Old Testament that speak of this ambiguous plurality in the one God are unfolded marvelously as we come into the New Testament; and so, the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

In order to recognize the unity of the Trinity in Scripture, we'll look first at what the Bible teaches about God the Father. Second, we'll see that the Bible teaches the full divinity of the Son. And third, we'll see that Scripture tells us the Holy Spirit is fully divine. Let's first consider what the Bible says about the Father.

FATHER

The Scriptures are extremely clear that the Father is both uncreated and fully God. We can see this in many places in Scripture, like Psalm 68:5, Psalm 89:26, John 8:54 and Romans 15:6.

Question 2: **Why do the Scriptures call God our Father?**

There is absolutely no doubt that the Scriptures call God our Father. And by calling God our Father, the Bible highlights the special relationship that God has with his creation and his people. The biblical language of “Father” also highlights the Father’s relationship to the other persons of the Trinity. Why do the Scriptures call God our Father?

Dr. Richard Lints

God’s called our “Father” as a way to communicate something fundamentally important about the nature of God and God’s relationship to us. So he — that is, God — creates us in community, in relationship. He creates us man and woman. He creates this human family as part of the way in which he has designed us to live. He then communicates his own relationship to us in language that makes sense of this structure, the structure of the family. Now, part of the design in creating man and woman into this bond of marriage, this creation of a human family, is that it reflects in some sense the divine family: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. So, this communal relationship, so critical to the being of God, to God’s character, is then reflected in the way we are to relate one to each other. So, it is in some sense a metaphor, this language of “Father,” but it’s more than a metaphor also, that it does communicate the reality that God’s bond of loyalty, reflected in the way he has made us, is also part of the very community in which God lives in eternity.

Dr. Jeff Lowman

One of the greatest privileges we have as believers is the ability to call God “Father.” And what it helps us understand is the tremendous work that Christ has done for us on the cross. And when you look at the Old Testament, you think about the names that God gave his people in the Old Testament, and then you think about the name “Father.” And the first name that we see in the Old Testament is *Elohim*; it refers to the fact that he’s Creator, that he’s all-powerful. The next name that you see is *El Shaddai*, which is really given to the patriarchs, and in that name God is saying that he is the Almighty, but not just that he is the Almighty, but that he is mighty for his people, and it shows that he is bound to his people. And then, of course, you have the great name for God, the tetragrammaton, YHWH, and in that name, it is the holy name of God — “I Am that I Am.” It was so holy before the people that they would not even pronounce the name. And so, in the Psalms you often have the writer saying, “Blessed be the name,” and that’s because of the reticence to actually say the name itself, even under the inspiration of the Holy

Spirit. And so, the name of God was so holy in the Old Testament that they actually forgot how to pronounce it; they forgot the vowels that were involved with the consonants. And yet, when we get to the New Testament, we see a complete change, and that change is brought about through the redemptive work of Christ, certainly exemplified in the rending of the veil of the curtain in the Holy of Holies, and God saying through the sacrifice of Christ on the cross that immediate access and full access has been brought to the Father. And so, what Christ is doing, he's actually teaching us to call God the Father, what he calls God the Father — "Father." And he is teaching us as his children that we are joint heirs with him and that our privilege is the same privilege that he has as the Son to call God, "Father." It is a tremendous privilege and a responsibility that we have as we call God "Father."

Question 3:

What encouragement can we draw from the fact that we are part of the family of God, with God himself as our Father?

God is the just, almighty King and Father of creation. Because of our sins, he could have justly condemned us to suffer his eternal wrath, but he has graciously loved us, forgiven us, justified us, and adopted us as his very own children. This means he is not only the Father of the eternal Son of God; he is also *our* Father. We are heirs of every spiritual blessing in the present, and of the new heavens and earth in the future. And God is able and willing to grant these blessings to each of his children around the world when they make it their priority to expand his kingdom on earth. He is our almighty, loving Father, and we have an intimate, eternal connection with him. This is the greatest blessing of all. What encouragement can we draw from the fact that we are part of the family of God, with God himself as our Father?

Dr. K. Erik Thoennes

There is *nothing* more encouraging than to think about the fact that God has adopted us into his family... To have God as our Father, really, is the pinnacle of God's work in our lives. We're not just forgiven by the Judge, we're adopted into God's family, and he's our Father, and we're his children... And that is the greatest blessing we could ever imagine.

Dr. Steve Harper

When Jesus talks about the kingdom of heaven in Matthew, to me, that's as expansive as it can get... So it's a huge concept, and it would be easy for us to get lost in that. And what saves us from doing that, I think, is when he talks in the Lord's Prayer and says, "When you pray, say, 'Our Father.'" My teaching area is spiritual formation, and

one of the things I say about the Lord's Prayer is that we start prayer by the recognition that at any given moment there could be millions of other people who are praying at the same time. One of the reasons we call God, "God," is that God can take each one of those prayers and can deal with them as if they were the only one that was, you know, vying for his attention in that moment. But that brings us into a holy fellowship, part of that kingdom of heaven personnel. And then right after that, of course, is the word Father, so that no matter who I am or where I am in that prayer, I'm moving toward God as *Abba*, moving toward God as Father. And if a person in Poland is calling God "Father," and I'm calling God "Father" in the United States, then that means we're brothers and sisters. If we have the same father, then we're members of the same family. So, I think Matthew gets at this in a powerful way with the concept of the kingdom of heaven, which he uses over and over again. But it's the life of prayer that draws us into the realization that in the moment that I'm praying, I'm praying with other people who are saying the same thing that I am. But when they're saying what I'm saying, it means we're family.

Dr. Jeff Lowman

There is great encouragement that we can draw from the fact that we're part of the family of God and God is our Father. For many believers, life is very difficult being a Christian. Many parts of the world are under persecution. And the great joy of their life is that they are part of the body, and they can identify themselves as the people of God. The Scripture tells us that God is our Father. We have the tremendous privilege, as Romans 8 tells us, of being able to call upon God as *Abba* — of course, the original being "Daddy" is a very familiar term. We also have the fact that God is constantly caring for us. He promises to the believers being written to in the book of Hebrews, I will never leave you nor forsake you — another situation where there was persecution at that time... And so, for the believer, the heart of his life is this encouragement that comes through Christ because God is now our Father.

Clearly, God the Father has loved us and welcomed us into his family. But we must never overlook the fact that he is the Holy One, the uncreated Creator of the universe. And we'll also see that the Son and Spirit share in the Father's divine essence, so there is complete unity among them.

In our exploration of the unity of the Trinity, we've looked at the biblical teaching regarding God the Father. Now, let's turn our attention to our second major topic, the full divinity of God the Son.

SON

Scripture teaches us that the Father and Son are two distinct, uncreated persons, eternally existing in one divine essence. They are equal in power and glory, and they share equally every divine attribute. It's not difficult to demonstrate from Scripture that the Son is a divine person, equal to the Father. Listen to Revelation 5:13-14 where John wrote this:

I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!" And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" and the elders fell down and worshiped (Revelation 5:13-14).

Observe carefully how John contrasted "every creature" with "him who sits on the throne and ... the Lamb." This means that the one who sits on the throne and the Lamb are not in the category of creatures. They're in the category of God, the creator of all things. This is why every creature worships him who sits on the throne and the Lamb.

Question 4:

How do the images of a lion and a lamb in Revelation 5 demonstrate that the Son is a divine person equal to the Father?

Revelation chapters 1 and 4 say that the one who sits on the throne is God the Father. And John 1 tells us that the Lamb is the Word of God who became flesh — Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Both of these passages clearly teach Jesus' uncreated divinity. In Revelation 5, John used the imagery of both a lamb and a lion to describe Jesus. How do the images of a lion and a lamb in Revelation 5 demonstrate that the Son is a divine person equal to the Father?

Dr. Mark L. Strauss

Revelation 5 is an amazing passage, because in many ways it sort of sums up the whole message of Revelation. John is shown a scroll, and no one is worthy to open this scroll. And so John is weeping because he knows the scroll holds the secret to God's future, the secret to the world's future in that regard. And suddenly, an angel announces that, wait, there is one who is worthy. It is the Lion, the Lion of the tribe of Judah. And that's a picture from Genesis 49. The lion is a symbol of royalty, and Judah, the tribe of Judah is described as a lion's whelp, a lion's cub, a picture of the reigning king from the line of David. And so, John turns, expecting to see a lion, a powerful lion. Instead he sees a lamb, a symbol of sacrifice, a symbol of suffering. And there's a beautiful picture of who Jesus is, because Jesus is the conquering king, he is the Messiah. He is the Lord of all, yet he accomplishes

salvation by suffering and dying as the sacrificial Lamb. So, the Lion who is the Lamb is the beautiful picture of who Jesus Christ is as Lord, as Sovereign, as King. But how he accomplishes that salvation is by suffering and dying as a sacrificial lamb to pay for our sins. So, a powerful picture of who Jesus is and how he accomplished our salvation.

Dr. Lai-Chang Kang, translation

A lion represents Jesus' kingly majesty; a lamb represents his gentleness, and more importantly perhaps, symbolizes him as a redeemer of sins. So, this is a wonderful device. But Revelation 5, I believe, has an even deeper meaning. It's intended to show Jesus' godhood. I say this because we know that something happened in the heavenly courts. In Revelation 4, after the praises of the wonders of God's creation, suddenly the praises stopped because God raised his right hand, holding a scroll, and a mighty angel asked if anyone could open this scroll... Who is it that can open the scroll? It's announced as the Lion of Judah, but once the announcement happened, what appeared was not a lion but a lamb, and when that lamb got the scroll, the entire court of heaven worshiped and praised him. This is very important, because there is the lamb — an "idol." It's inconceivable that a lamb would be worshiped in the heavenly court. This should be offensive to God, and yet, God is not angry, but rather encourages the entire universe to worship the Lamb in front of him. What can you say except that this Lamb is God? Jesus' divinity is fully shown here.

Revelation 5 places Jesus in the category of divine. He isn't one of God's creatures. Instead he's equal with God. And as God's divine Son, he will conquer all his and our enemies when he returns. His victory over Satan will be complete, and all God's people will have peace with God the Father and his divine Son. Perhaps the most famous passage in Scripture that identifies Jesus Christ with God is in John 1:1-4. Listen to this familiar passage:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men (John 1:1-4).

In this passage, John called Jesus "the Word." And he distinguished Jesus from God the Father when he said, "the Word was with God." But he also identified Jesus as God when he claimed that "the Word was God."

Question 5: **How does John 1:1 teach that Jesus is God?**

The first chapter of John, and the first verse in particular, has been used throughout the history of the church as proof that Jesus is God the Son, the second person of the Trinity. He is God and has been with God since the beginning. He's also involved in the creation of all things. And because he's involved in the creation of all things, he himself must be uncreated. He is the eternal and uncreated Creator. So, how does John 1:1 teach that Jesus is God?

Dr. Daniel B. Wallace

Throughout the centuries of the church, this has been a text that everyone has said, "This teaches the deity of Christ." Even very, very liberal scholars like Rudolf Bultmann, who is the great liberal New Testament scholar of the twentieth century, said John 1:1 is absolutely undisputed. It clearly teaches the deity of Christ. Now, when you look at the Greek there, what it's saying is that... I don't think the best translation is that "the Word was God." That's the translation that is customary, but the best translation is probably what the revised English Bible has: "What God was, the Word was." In essence, what the Greek is doing is it's saying that in terms of his essence, in terms of what he is, the Word is identical to God... And so, the last few words of John 1:1, "and the Word was God," say in the most concise way possible, that the second person of the Trinity is equal in authority, in worship, in attributes, as the first person of the Trinity, and yet they are not the same person. Does John 1:1 teach the deity of Christ? Absolutely it does. Do the manuscripts differ on this? It's one of those verses that we have virtually no differences among any manuscripts whatsoever. John 1:1 is a verse we can take to the bank. It affirms the deity of Christ.

Dr. John McKinley

In John's gospel, he introduces the readers to Jesus with a prologue — first eighteen verses — where he says, "Jesus is the Word; the Word was with God; the Word was God"... And so, to call Jesus the Word of God is a way of very quickly, and in context to the Old Testament, identify Jesus as a divine person, that he is a divine associate. He is fully God himself. John is also in that, saying, "In the beginning was the Word," he is saying that, in Jesus, you have a new creation taking place. And so, the God who was creating in the beginning and who creates by word and Spirit, that God is now bringing about a new creation, and the Word is now here, and he's enacting that in his life. So, with calling Jesus the Word of God, John is also saying he is the Son of God, he is the divine agent, and he is the one who brings life.

Dr. Jeff Lowman

John begins his gospel — unlike the other gospel writers — he begins with the person of Christ. John 1:1: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,” and then very emphatically, “the Word was God.” And, of course, we read in John 1:14, “and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten ... full of grace and truth.” And so John begins his gospel by telling us that Jesus is God. We see that also on the lips of Christ in the Gospel of John. You have in John 10 where Christ says, “I and the Father are one.” And it’s interesting that, there, Christ places himself before the Father, emphasizing his equality with the Father. And you have the many “I am” passages, the *ego eimi* passages, where Christ says, “I am the true vine,” “I am the light of the world,” or even that stunning passage in John 8 where it says, “before Abraham was, I am.”

Question 6:**Why was it necessary for the man Jesus also to be God?**

Clearly, Scripture teaches that Jesus is the true and living God. Both Paul and John understood this. But one of the great mysteries of the Trinity is that Jesus is not only fully God, he is also fully human. And it is through his humanity — through his life, death and resurrection — that we are saved. And because the human Jesus is also the eternal God, equal in power and glory to the Father, we can trust that he is worthy and able to redeem us from our sins. Why was it necessary for the man Jesus also to be God?

Dr. Derek Thomas

If we are to be reconciled to God, then only God can forgive sin. This is why in the great discussions on Christology... Particularly, I think, of Anselm of Canterbury’s discussions in the twelfth, thirteenth century in his famous book *Cur Deus Homo* — Why the God-Man — he was asking that question: why was it necessary for the mediator to be both God and man? — that he was true God and true man, two natures in one person. And the reason why he has to be a man is that he has to represent us. He must be tempted in every point like as we are. He must be the second man, the last Adam, but he must also be God, because only God can forgive sin, because God is the one who has been sinned against in Adam. That’s why Anselm and others argued for the absolute necessity of the two natures of Jesus, that he has to be both man and at the same time God.

Dr. J Scott Horrell

Second Corinthians 5 talks about how God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ... We see it in vivid color, as Christ becomes the perfect substitute for us. Because he is fully human yet without sin, he can be our complete substitute. And yet, because he's God, as Francis Schaeffer used to say, his death on the cross has "infinite value" for all who believe. And so, we see the Father and then the Son effectuating that substitution we need. That's why he's worshiped as the Lamb who was slain, who purchased by his blood those from every tribe and language and nation and people.

The Scriptures are clear that Jesus is both God and man. He's the second person of the Trinity, God the Son. It's an amazing truth that the eternal Son of God became human and lived among us. He died and rose again so that we might be God's children and Jesus' brothers and sisters. This is God's great love for us. And because Jesus is God, we can freely worship him and adore him for all his glory, power and goodness that he bestows on us every day.

Now that we've considered the unity of the Trinity by deriving the divinity of the Father and the Son from Scripture, let's turn our attention to the Holy Spirit. Scripture also teaches that the third person of the Trinity is fully divine.

SPIRIT

Question 7:

How can we demonstrate the divinity of the Holy Spirit from Scripture?

The Scriptures don't speak of the divinity of the Holy Spirit as frequently as they do of the divinity of the Son. But, there are a few places in Scripture where the uncreated divinity of the Holy Spirit can be clearly seen. How can we demonstrate the divinity of the Holy Spirit from Scripture?

Dr. Glenn R. Kreider

The New Testament doesn't spend a great deal of time explicitly addressing the question of the divinity of the Holy Spirit, unlike the divinity, the deity of the Son where there's a great deal of attention to that he is the Creator, that he is sent from the Father, etc. The Holy Spirit doesn't get that same kind of attention. But I think there is a compelling case to be made from the way the three persons of the Godhead are mentioned, the way they appear together in the baptism of Jesus, in the presentation at the temple, those kind of events. But primarily, it's because of the way Jesus talks about the Spirit that, in the Upper Room Discourse, he says, "I will ask the Father; he will

send another Comforter who will be — who you already know because he is like me — he will be with you. He will be in you.” But the central, the pivotal text is in Acts 5 where, in the story of Ananias and Sapphira, when they lied to the apostles and claimed that they had received a certain sum of money for their house, for their property, and they had received much more than that. When Peter rebukes them, Peter says, “You have lied to the Holy Spirit.” And a little bit later in the same discourse, “You have not lied to man; you have lied to God.” So, to lie to the Holy Spirit is to lie to God.

Rev. Dr. Emad A. Mikhail, translation

Actually, there’s more than one way to demonstrate that the Holy Spirit is God, or as theologians say, to demonstrate the divinity of the Holy Spirit. First of all, we see the divinity of the Holy Spirit in creation, his role in creation. In Genesis 1:1-2:

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters (Genesis 1:1-2).

There are two things here. First, the Scripture does not tell us that God created the Holy Spirit. He is not created. He is the Creator. He is God. This is the first thing. The second thing is that the Spirit of God participated in the process of creation, not just that he is not created, but also he participated in the process of creation because he is God, and therefore, he is the Creator. In the expression “And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters,” we see here the image of a bird who hovers over the nest of his chicks. It’s like he’s embracing his nest and giving life. So, the image here is that the Spirit of God is the one who gives life to the world. He is the Creator, and therefore, we see here the divinity of the Holy Spirit.

Also there’s a second way that shows us his divinity — his role in revelation. He reveals himself through the Son and also through the Holy Spirit. I’d like to read from 1 Corinthians 2:9-11:

But, as it is written, ‘What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him’ — these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person’s thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 2:9-11).

The words here are clear. In order for the Holy Spirit to reveal God, he has to be equal to God; he has to know God’s thoughts. It’s

impossible for an angel or any creature to reveal the Creator because he cannot search the depths of God. But as the spirit of man knows all of man's depths, the Spirit of God knows everything in God's depths, and this demonstrates to us the divinity of the Holy Spirit.

There's a third way that shows us the divinity of the Holy Spirit — his role in believers' lives, his role in the life of the church. And there's a lot to say at this point, but let's turn to chapter 3 of the same book, 1 Corinthians. Paul talks about the Holy Spirit in the believer's life in 1 Corinthians 3:16:

Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? (1 Corinthians 3:16).

Contemplate these words carefully. He says, "... you are God's temple." Why? Because "God's Spirit dwells in you." If the Spirit of God is not God how does his dwelling in us make us the temple of God? The concept of the temple is that God lives in his own temple. So, if the Spirit of God is not God, he would never have said the words of verse 16, that "you are God's temple and ... God's Spirit dwells in you." So, he equates the Spirit of God with God. The dwelling of the Holy Spirit in us makes us a temple for God because the Spirit is God. The point is very clear.

Question 8:

How do the works of the Holy Spirit demonstrate his divinity?

The Holy Spirit is divine in the same sense that the Father and Son are divine. All three are uncreated and equal in power, glory, eternity, personality and every other divine attribute. This truth can be seen even more clearly from the things that he does in Scripture. How do the works of the Holy Spirit demonstrate his divinity?

Dr. Mike Fabarez

The works of the Spirit from beginning to end in the Bible clearly reflect his divinity, that he is indeed God and equal with God, coequal with God. We see that from the very beginning in that he is an agent of creation. Much like Christ is described as an agent of creation, the Spirit is described that way in the second verse of the Bible, clarified in the book of Job, that he is actually the one giving life to people. Well, there's only one Creator. That Creator exists in three persons, and all three persons of the Godhead are described as having a hand in that creation. There's mystery in that, but there's clearly divinity in that. Being the one who is the one who is described as overseeing the writing of Scripture. As 2 Peter 1:21 says, he was the one who moved these authors along to write this book that is described as perfect, with not one jot or tittle ever being removed from the text till it's all

fulfilled. Only God can do that. In Isaiah, it speaks of a God who can see the end from beginning and that it's recorded and revealed to his prophets. Well, the Spirit of God is the agent of that, and clearly this is an act of divinity. There are many things throughout the Scripture that describe it, but certainly creation and the oversight and production of the Scripture are two very clear ways that we see the divinity of the Spirit.

Dr. Keith Johnson

There are certain works that demonstrate the deity of the Holy Spirit, and I'll briefly mention four. First, in John 16, we're told that the Spirit judges. Yet, we know that judgment is a prerogative that belongs only to God. Second, we note in Psalm 33:6 that the Spirit is involved in creation. And yet the act of creating is something that only God can do. In John 3, we see that the Spirit regenerates, that he brings about the new birth, and yet this is something that only God can do. And finally, we know from 2 Timothy 3:16 that the Spirit inspires the Scriptures. And yet only God can reveal himself to us. Together all of these factors point to the deity of the Holy Spirit.

Dr. Uche Anizor

The works of the Holy Spirit are probably the primary way we understand who the Holy Spirit is. So, one of the main arguments back in the early church regarding the Spirit's deity was that the Spirit does the very things that only God does, and if that's the case — that the Spirit does what only God does — then we have to surmise that the Spirit is God. So, for instance, when we read in the New Testament that, in Romans 8, it speaks about, “the Spirit of him ... who raised Christ from the dead” is living in us, and the same Spirit will “give life to [our] mortal bodies.” And so, what we get there is that the Spirit is the agent of resurrection life, of new life. And who is the one who brings new life? Who brings life at all? It's God himself. And so, this is Paul implicitly saying that the Spirit is God the Almighty himself, the life giver. And we also read throughout the New Testament ... that the Spirit is the one who sanctifies. And when you read the Old Testament and you ask yourself the question, “Who is it that makes God's people holy?” And the answer is straightforward; it's God himself who makes his people holy. And so, when sanctification is tied to the Spirit explicitly in the New Testament, what the New Testament is saying is that the Spirit is Yahweh himself, is God, the same God you encounter in the Old Testament.

While the clear teaching of Scripture is that the Holy Spirit is a divine person of the Trinity, it's common, even among Christians, to refer to the Spirit in very impersonal terms. Some Christians today even refer to him as “it” — an impersonal force — rather than “he,” a divine person. But if we look carefully in Scripture, we can see that the Spirit

is indeed a divine person, and not merely an impersonal force. Let's look closely at Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 2:10-11:

The Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 2:10-11).

Notice here that the Spirit of God searches the depths of God and knows his thoughts. These are the activities of a person with a will, not an impersonal force. We also see this in Psalm 139:1.

Question 9:

How can we demonstrate the personality of the Holy Spirit from Scripture?

Searching and knowing is an attribute of a distinct, self-aware personality who is in a loving relationship with other self-aware personalities. This necessarily implies that the Spirit of God is a person, distinct from the person of God. If the Spirit of God were simply God's impersonal attribute of power or his impersonal force in action, he couldn't "search" and "know." How can we demonstrate the personality of the Holy Spirit from Scripture?

Dr. Craig S. Keener

Not every passage that talks about the Spirit of God identifies the Spirit as a distinct person. But you do have explicitly Trinitarian passages, for instance, Matthew 28, "baptizing ... in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." And then you have other passages, like in 2 Corinthians 13 and so on, that mention the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Also, in John 14–16, we read about the Spirit doing things that only a person would do. For example, Jesus says that he will send another advocate like himself, the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit goes on to prosecute the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment, just like Jesus did. The Spirit is a witness just like we are witnesses, and so on. So, the Spirit is identified as a distinct person in a number of passages.

Rev. Mike Osborne

I can think of several ways we can demonstrate the personality of the Holy Spirit from Scripture. The Bible over and over again refers to the Holy Spirit in personal terms. Like, to be a person doesn't mean you have a body. It means you have personal qualities, attributes and so on. For example, the Bible speaks so clearly that the Holy Spirit searches hearts. The Holy Spirit imparts gifts. The Holy Spirit

teaches. I mean, read through the Gospel of John, and over and over again, Jesus is telling us what the Holy Spirit does... He's teaching. He's revealing all truth. He's guiding. He's comforting. He's leading. You know, all of those things are things that persons do. Furthermore, later in the New Testament the apostles teach us that the Holy Spirit has emotions. He is grieved, Paul says in Ephesians. In 1 Thessalonians he says, don't quench the Holy Spirit's fire, or don't put out the fire. So, all of these are things that only persons can do. The Holy Spirit is not a force. He is not an "it." He is a "he."

Dr. Peter Walker

The New Testament says on several occasions, yes, the Holy Spirit is like a force — Acts 2, "rushing wind" — but the Holy Spirit is more than a force. Paul describes on one occasion that we can grieve the Holy Spirit. You can only grieve a person. And John 14, Jesus speaking, tells us that he's going to send *another*, another one who's like Jesus, who's going to bear witness to him. And Jesus' language there is quite clearly describing a person, a person like Jesus. So the Holy Spirit is described in personal terms in the New Testament, not just an impersonal force. And the rest of the church has gathered around that witness and said, "This is what we also believe." It's true that in terms of articulating it in the later creed, it took three or four hundred years before there was a real debate about this, but when Basil of Caesarea discusses it in the fourth century, he's not articulating a new doctrine, he's just bringing to the table, what people have already been believing for three hundred years.

CONCLUSION

In this lesson on the unity of the Trinity, we've seen that the one God reveals himself in Scripture in three uncreated persons. The Father is fully divine throughout Scripture, the Son is clearly divine in the New Testament, and the Spirit shares full divinity with both the Father and the Son.

Although the Bible may not begin with a distinct description of God's Trinitarian nature, Scripture still reveals God as one unified essence in three divine persons. And each of these divine persons is fully God. It may be difficult for us to understand what this really means. In fact, we may never fully comprehend the nature of the Trinity. Scripture itself necessarily implies that the Trinity is partly comprehensible by normal reason and partly mysterious. But by studying Scripture, we can begin to understand our Trinitarian God better. And we can rejoice in the unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

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