

Sermon Study Guide The Significance of the Trinity

The notion of the Trinity (Latin *trinitas* “tri-unity” or “three-in-oneness”) is one of the most important teachings of the Christian faith. Although the word Trinity is not found in the Bible (neither is the word incarnation), the teaching it describes is clearly found there. Briefly defined, the teaching of the Trinity stands for the concept that “God eternally exists as three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and each person is fully God, and there is one God.”

God himself is a mystery, how much more the incarnation or the Trinity. However, that should not trouble us as long as the different aspects of these mysteries are clearly taught in Scripture. In studying the Trinity in Scripture, we need to be aware that we can only ever achieve a partial understanding of what the Trinity is.

In the Old Testament

Genesis 1:1

In the beginning _____ created the heavens and the earth.

Throughout the creation story in Genesis 1 the word for God is *'Elohim*, the plural form of *'Eloha*.

Genesis 1:26

Then God said, “Let _____ (plural) make man in _____ (plural) image, according to _____ (plural) likeness.”

Genesis 3:22

Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of _____.”

Genesis 11:7

“Come, let _____ go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech.”

Isaiah 6:8

Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: “Whom shall I send, And who will go for _____?”

What about there being “One” God?

Deuteronomy 6:4

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is _____!

Genesis 2:24

Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become _____ flesh.

According to Genesis 2:24, man and woman are to “become one (’echad) flesh,” a union of two separate persons. In Deuteronomy 6:4 the same word is used of God, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one (’echad).”

In the New Testament

Matthew 3:16, 17

When he had been baptized, _____ came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the _____ of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, ‘This is My beloved _____, in whom I am well pleased.’

The account of Jesus’ baptism is a striking manifestation of the doctrine of the Trinity — there stood Christ in human form, visible to all; the Holy Spirit descended upon Christ in bodily form as a dove; and the voice of the Father spoke from heaven, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

Matthew 28:19

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the _____ and of the _____ and of the _____.

2 Corinthians 13:14

The grace of the Lord _____.

The love of _____.

The communion of the _____.

The Divinity of Christ

John 1:1

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was _____.

John 1:14

And the _____ became _____ and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 20:28

And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my _____!"

What about Jesus being the only "begotten" son?

1 John 4:9

In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only _____ (monogenes) Son into the world, that we might live through Him.

Hebrews 11:17

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only _____ son.

The word *monogenes* means "only, one of a kind, unique." In Hebrews 11:17 Isaac is called Abraham's *monogenes* son. Isaac was not Abraham's only son, but he was the unique son, the only son of promise. The emphasis is not on the birth but on the uniqueness of the son. Therefore, the translation "only" or "unique" is to be preferred.

What about Jesus being the first-born?

Colossians 1:15, 18

He is the image of the invisible God, the _____ over all creation. [...] And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the _____ from the _____, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

In Colossians 1:18, Christ is called the "first-born from the dead." Though he is not chronologically the first (Moses and others had preceded him), he is the pre-eminent one.

Holy Spirit as the Third Person of the Trinity

There are a number of verses where the Holy Spirit is mentioned together with the Father and the Son (Matthew 28:19; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6; 2 Corinthians 13:14). This indicates that the Father and the Son are persons; the Holy Spirit, therefore should also be a person.

The Holy Spirit is said to speak (Acts 8:29), teach (John 14:26), bear witness (John 15:26), intercede on behalf of others (Romans 8:26-27), distribute gifts to others (1 Corinthians 12:11), and to forbid or allows certain things (Acts 16:6-7).

According to Ephesians 4:30, the Holy Spirit can also be grieved by people. All these activities are characteristic of a person not a force.

Acts 5:3, 4

But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the _____ and keep back *part* of the price of the land for yourself? 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 _____."

The Holy Spirit is omnipotent. He distributes spiritual gifts 'to each one individually as He wills' (1 Corinthians 12:11). He is omnipresent. He will "abide" with his people "forever" (John 14:16). None can escape His influence (Psalm 139:7-10). He also is omniscient, because "the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God" and "no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God" (1 Corinthians 2:10,11).

So what?

"It is probably not very surprising that in this rather lonely environment, the Christian pursuit of worship has been made a purely individualistic endeavor. The lack of Trinitarian thinking and preaching has exacerbated the prevailing individualism of our culture and has brought it right into our Christian life and practice. If we do not think of God as a relational being in himself, we cannot appreciate the point that we are made to reflect his image in our relationships with one another. More often, we only consider God as relational insofar as what we can get out of him in a utilitarian sense. We need to depend on one another to help us comprehend the majesty and love of God and respond in true worship as a community. (See Ephesians 3:14-21.) Three self-giving, self-effacing persons constitute the amazing God whom we worship! It is this aspect of God's character that we seek to reflect in our life and walk as the church of Jesus Christ." -Gerhard Pfandl

The Trinity is the ultimate model of community for every Christian.