

THE TRIUNE NATURE OF GOD

WE BELIEVE . . .

. . . that there is one God, eternally preexistent as the God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

“Eternally preexistent” is a statement that means God has always existed and that He always will. We can force our finite minds to accept that time goes endlessly forward but usually struggle with time going endlessly back. We want a starting point, but God has no beginning. Even before “the beginning” spoken of in Genesis, God eternally existed. He has always existed. We can try to make our brains conceive of this until they explode or simply accept this truth by faith.

Another aspect of God that we have difficulty understanding is the triune nature of God. The triune nature of God is most commonly referred to as the Trinity. Though the term “trinity” is not used in Scripture, it is clearly observable in Scripture.

We believe that the Scripture shows that there is one God who has and always exist as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—three distinct persons in One being. Some believe that God changes to sometimes be the Father, sometimes be the Son, and sometimes be the Son.¹ However, He is all three persons at once.

We cannot squeeze God into our perceptions of reality. We must allow our minds to be transformed by studying what the Bible has to say about God’s nature.

The Triune Nature of God as Seen in the Old Testament

It is important that we look throughout the whole Bible when studying the nature of God. So, let us take a look in the Old Testament. The plural nature of God can be seen beginning in Genesis 1:1-2.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ²The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. ³Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light.

At first glance, one might not notice what is going on in this verse, but you will clearly see the triune nature of God in this verse as we continue. We can view this verse in retrospect by reading John 1:1-4. Here we have it side-by-side with Genesis 1:1-2.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. ⁴ In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ²The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. ³Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light.

Putting these two verses together, we see that God created the heavens and the earth. We also see that the Word, who is Jesus (see John 1:14) was there in the beginning with God. Jesus was with God in the beginning. This clearly implies two persons. It also clearly states that Jesus was God while this was happening, and furthermore; goes on to say that all things were made through Him, the Word, Jesus. Made through Him by whom? The Father.

¹ This doctrine that God changes form is Sabellianism and sometimes called modalism. It is considered heresy by mainstream Christianity.

Next, notice that the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. Thus, we see God (the Father), the Word (Jesus), and the Spirit all clearly involved in creation.

Continuing in Genesis chapter one, we see more evidence of the triune nature.

Genesis 2:26-27

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness..."

²⁷ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

God said, "Let US make man in OUR image, according to OUR likeness." Why did God say "Us" and "Our"? We know that only God can create life. Only He can speak so that something will be created from nothing. As far as Scripture teaches us, before the creation on earth, only God existed with the angels. Angels cannot create. He wasn't asking help from the angels. That is ridiculous. He didn't need their consent or assistance. He said, "Let US CREATE in OUR image." Man was created in the image of God, not in the image of angels. Verse 27 reads, "So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him."

Man was created in the image of God, not partly in the image of God and in partly in the image of angels. Therefore "Us" can only refer to God, and if "Us" is God, then we have to ask ourselves why? We believe that "We" and "Us" is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. They are not three different Gods, but one God who exists in three persons. Thus the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit created the heavens and earth.

Teachings of the Trinity in the New Testament

We have used the verses in John to combine with the verses in Genesis to get a picture of just Who was involved in creation. Now we move on to teachings in the New Testament about the triune nature of God.

We begin with the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist. John clearly stated before the people who had come to be baptized by him that he, John, was not the Messiah, but only called to announce Him. When Jesus arrived at the Jordan River, John said of Jesus, "Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world," (Jn. 1:29). Then the following took place.

Matthew 3:16-17

When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. ¹⁷ And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Do you see it? **Jesus** was baptized by John—He is the Son of God. The **Spirit of God** descended on Jesus like a dove. Then the **Father** spoke from heaven about the Son. This is one of the clearest pictures of the Trinity. At the same moment, we see the three persons in operation. Jesus is in the water. The Dove is on Him. The voice speaks from heaven. How could Scripture be more obvious?

More Evidence

In Mark 9, we read about the Transfiguration. Jesus took Peter, James, and John with him to a high mountain. Suddenly, Jesus was transfigured before them. Then there appeared with Him Elijah and Moses. After Peter suggested that they construct a temple for each one of them, we read in verse seven, "And a cloud came and overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!'" ⁸ Suddenly, when they had looked around, they saw no one anymore, but only Jesus with themselves."

In this record, we see a cloud descended (which one could reasonably see as the Holy Spirit), Jesus was transfigured, and a voice declared Jesus to be His Son. Here we have the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit at the same time, but distinct from each other.

Also consider the multiple times that Jesus prays to the Father. He wasn't praying to Himself, but to His Father.

Here are examples of other distinctions between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The Father sent the Son.

John 8:42

Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me."

The Father honors the Son.

John 8:54

Jesus answered, "If I honor Myself, My honor is nothing. It is My Father who honors Me, of whom you say that He is your God."

All of God evident at the death of the first Christian martyr.

Acts 7:54-56

*When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him (Stephen) with their teeth. ⁵⁵ But he, being full of the **Holy Spirit**, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and **Jesus** standing at the right hand of **God**, ⁵⁶ and said, "Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!"*

Here are more verses speaking of all three.

Acts 10:38

*. . . how God anointed **Jesus** of Nazareth with the **Holy Spirit** and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for **God** was with Him.*

1 Peter 1:1-2

*Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, ² elect according to the foreknowledge of **God the Father**, in sanctification of the **Spirit**, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of **Jesus Christ**: Grace to you and peace be multiplied."*

The Apostle John expressed God as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

1 John 1:3

*That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the **Father and** with His **Son** Jesus Christ.*

1 John 2:1

*My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the **Father, Jesus** Christ the righteous."*

1 John 2:22

*Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the **Father and the Son**."*

1 John 2:23 *Whoever denies the **Son** does not have the **Father** either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.*

1 John 3:24

*Now he who keeps His commandments abides in **Him**, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the **Spirit** whom He has given us."*

Again, Paul expressed In 2 Corinthians 13:14 that there is one God manifested as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

**The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit
be with you all.**

LIFE APPLICATIONS

The Triune God in Our Lives

What are the implications of understanding the Holy Trinity of God? First of all, to deny the Father and the Son is to be antichrist, against Christ. None of us want to do that! This is on the negative side of the equation. The beautiful side of the story is that all of God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, lives in us, loves us, and is working in our lives.

All of God Lives Inside of You

GOD THE FATHER

John 14:23

*Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and **We will come to him and make Our home with him.***

Ephesians 4:6

*One **God and Father** of all, who is above all, and through all, **and in you all.***

GOD THE SON

Colossians 1:27

*To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is **Christ in you, the hope of glory.***

Hebrews 13:5

*Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "**I will never leave you nor forsake you.**"*

GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

John 14:17

*The **Spirit** of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for **He dwells with you and will be in you.***

All of God Loves You

GOD THE FATHER

John 14:21

*He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by **My Father, and I will love him** and manifest Myself to him."*

John 16:27

*For the **Father** Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God.*

GOD THE SON

Galatians 2:20

*I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the **Son of God**, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*

John 15:9

*As the Father loved Me, **I also have loved you;** abide in My love.*

GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

Romans 15:30

*Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the **love of the Spirit**, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me,*

Romans 5:5

*Now hope does not disappoint, because the **love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit** who was given to us.*

1 John 3:1

*Behold what manner of **love the Father has bestowed on us**, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.*

Ephesians 3:17b-19

*...that you, being rooted and grounded in love,¹⁸ may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—¹⁹ **to know the love of Christ** which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*

All of God is Working in You

GOD THE FATHER

1 Timothy 1:2

*To Timothy, a true son in the faith: **Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.***

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

*Now may our **Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father**, who has **loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace,**¹⁷ **comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.***

John 3:16

*For **God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son**, that whoever believes in Him should **not perish but have everlasting life.***

Philippians 2:13

*For it is **God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure***

Colossians 1:12

*Giving thanks to the **Father** who has **qualified us** to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.*

2 Corinthians 2:3-4

*Blessed be the **God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,**⁴ **who comforts us in all our tribulation**, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the*

GOD THE SON

Ephesians 2:18

*For through **Him** we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.*

1 Timothy 2:5

*For there is one God and one **Mediator** between God and men, the **Man Christ Jesus***

Romans 3:24

*Being **justified freely** by His grace through the **redemption** that is in Christ Jesus*

1 John 2:1

*My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an **Advocate with the Father**, Jesus Christ the righteous.*

Romans 5:17

For if by the one man's offense death reigned

GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

John 16:13

*However, when He, the **Spirit of truth**, has come, He will **guide you into all truth**; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and **He will tell you things to come.***

Romans 5:5

*Now hope does not disappoint, because the **love of God has been poured out in our hearts** by the Holy Spirit who was given to us*

Jude 1:20

*But you, beloved, **building yourselves up** on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit*

John 14:26

*But the **Helper**, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will **teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.***

Ephesians 1:13-14

*In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were **sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,**¹⁴ who is the*

comfort with which we ourselves are **comforted by God**.

Ephesians 1:3

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has **blessed us with every spiritual blessing** in the heavenly places in Christ,

Ephesians 1:17

that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the **spirit of wisdom and revelation** in the knowledge of Him,

Jude 1:1

Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, To those who are called, **sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ:**

Romans 15:13

Now may the God of hope **fill you with all joy and peace in believing**, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

through the one, much more those who receive **abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life** through the One, Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:4

I thank my God always concerning you for the **grace of God** which was given to you by Christ Jesus

1 Corinthians 1:30

But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us **wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption**

1 Corinthians 15:57

But thanks be to God, who gives us the **victory** through our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 John 1:7

But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have **fellowship with one another**, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son **cleanses us from all sin**.

John 15:15

No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you **friends**, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.

guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

Titus 3:5

not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the **washing of regeneration and renewing** of the Holy Spirit

Acts 1:8

But you shall receive **power** when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be **witnesses** to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth

1 Corinthians 2:9-11

But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him."

¹⁰ But God has **revealed them to us** through His Spirit. For the Spirit **searches** all things, yes, the **deep things** of God. ¹¹ For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.

We will spend a lifetime learning about all that God has done and is doing in our lives. It is a constant adventure as He reveals His love to us each day. We don't have to worry that our minds can't quite put the nature of God into a tidy little human box. God is who He is. Based on His word, and by faith, we accept this, even though in many ways it remains mysterious to us.

What a blessing it is for us to have the Godhead working in us 24/7/365. Even when we are not faithful, He still is. He promised to never leave us or forsake us, so we can know that He is always here and that we can draw near to Him at any time without fear.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION OR REVIEW

1. What evidence for the triune nature of God stands out to you as very significant?
2. How would you would explain the Trinity to someone?
3. If you'd like, summarize the roles of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in our lives.

God the Father

God the Son

God the Holy Spirit