

Video Transcript: The Holy Trinity

1.

Christians believe that there is only one God, but that he exists as three persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This doctrine of the Trinity is one of the most difficult to understand, but is central to the Christian faith.

In this video, I will present evidence to show that the doctrine of the Trinity is the correct view of God, and will also show why it is so important.

2.

The word “Trinity” is used to summarise the Christian belief that:

God exists as three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and each person is fully God, and there is one God.

The triune nature of God is alluded to in the Old Testament, but is most clearly revealed in the New Testament.

It was Jesus himself who most clearly revealed the triune nature of God. He did this when he:

1. Claimed to be the Son of God and equal to God (e.g., John 10:30, 36).
2. Equated the presence of the Holy Spirit in his disciples with his own presence with them after his death and resurrection (e.g., John 14:15-18).

3.

In the New Testament, the writings of the apostles assume a wide understanding and acceptance of the doctrine of the Trinity by the early Church. For example, Paul wrote:

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all (2 Corinthians 13:14).

Four centuries later, in an attempt to combat heretical teachings, the doctrine was articulated by the Roman Catholic Church in the Athanasius Creed.

It received further elucidation at the hands of John Calvin in the sixteenth century to attain its current form in the Protestant faith

4.

In several places in the Old Testament God refers to himself in both the singular and the plural, reflecting his triune nature:

1. In Genesis 1:26-27 we read, “God said, ‘Let **us** make man in **our** image ...’ So God created man in **his own** image ...”
2. Similarly, in Genesis 3:22 and 11:7.
3. In Isaiah 6:8, God says: “Whom shall **I** send? And who shall go for **us**?”

Other Old Testament passages reveal a clear distinction between the three persons of God.

5.

In Psalm 45:7 and Psalm 110:1, two persons are referred to, both of whom are called God.

From the New Testament we learn that these two persons are God the Father and God the Son (cf. Hebrews 1:8-9 and Matthew 22:41-46).

There are also several passages which refer to “the angel of the Lord” who is also called “God” or “the Lord” and is evidently Jesus Christ (e.g., Genesis 16:11-13; Exodus 3:2-6; 23:20-21).

The Holy Spirit is also seen to possess a distinct personality in Isaiah 63:10 where we learn that God’s people “rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit.” (cf. Ephesians 4:30).

6.

The New Testament provides more explicit teaching on the triune nature of God. For example, when Jesus was baptised, all three members of the Trinity were present:

As soon as Jesus was baptised, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.' (Matthew 3:16-17).

At the end of his earthly ministry, Jesus commanded his disciples:

... go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19).

7.

Many passages in the New Testament confirm the divinity of Christ. For example, Paul taught that:

... in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form (Colossians 2:9).

John, referring to Christ as "the Word", proclaimed:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning (John 1:1-2).

Jesus himself confirmed this in several places. On one occasion, he said: "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30).

8.

At another time, Jesus said, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9).

The Holy Spirit is also revealed to be fully God.

For example, Paul notes that, "the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God" (1 Corinthians 2:10-11).

Compare this with the proclamation of David:

Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there (Psalm 139:7-8).

9.

We see, therefore, from Scripture that God exists as three distinct persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and that each person is fully God.

But we are also told throughout the Bible that there is only one God! For example:

I am the Lord, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God (Isaiah 45:5).

For there is one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus... (1 Timothy 2:5).

10.

There is also logical evidence to support the Trinity. One argument goes like this:

The Bible tells us that man was made in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26-27).

But man is a highly social creature. We desire to love and be loved, and to fellowship with one another.

Therefore, God must also be highly social. But how could he be social if he were a single entity?

With the Trinity, however, God can be social. Thus, Jesus was able to say to his disciples:

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Now remain in my love (John 15:9).

11.

We can extend this argument further.

The Bible also tells us that God is perfect, but that man is sinful.

As such, human relationships will be flawed even in the best of circumstances.

Therefore, man requires an example and role model for right relationships, and the Trinity provides this example.

Thus, Jesus was able to instruct his disciples:

My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you (John 15:12).

12.

Finally, this argument can be extended even further.

Given the fallen state of man, there are three things that every person requires for salvation:

1. An impartial judge. Even guilty people would prefer to be judged by an honest judge than a corrupt one. The Father is this righteous judge.
2. A redeemer to deliver them from the inevitable verdict of guilty. Jesus is this Redeemer.
3. A counsellor to guide them through life and help them to stay on the right track. The Holy Spirit is this Councillor.

Thus, the Trinity provides the means by which we can be presented to God “before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy” (Jude 24).

13.

The idea of the Trinity, that God exists as three distinct persons, each of whom is fully God, and yet there is only one God, is impossible for the human mind to fully comprehend.

Nevertheless, it is the clear teaching of Scripture, and in particular, of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is also supported from logical argument provided we accept the teaching of Scripture that man was made in the image of God, and is a fallen creature in need of a Saviour.

Thus, Paul was able to encourage the believers at Ephesus:

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ ... For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit (Ephesians 2:13, 18).