

Question: "What does the Bible teach about the Trinity?"

Answer from Got Questions: The most difficult thing about the Christian concept of the Trinity is that there is no way to perfectly and completely understand it. The Trinity is a concept that is impossible for any human being to fully understand, let alone explain. God is infinitely greater than we are; therefore, we should not expect to be able to fully understand Him. The Bible teaches that the Father is God, that Jesus is God, and that the Holy Spirit is God. The Bible also teaches that there is only one God. Though we can understand some facts about the relationship of the different Persons of the Trinity to one another, ultimately, it is incomprehensible to the human mind. However, this does not mean the Trinity is not true or that it is not based on the teachings of the Bible.

The Trinity is one God existing in three Persons. Understand that this is not in any way suggesting three Gods. Keep in mind when studying this subject that the word "Trinity" is not found in Scripture. This is a term that is used to attempt to describe the triune God—three coexistent, co-eternal Persons who make up God. Of real importance is that the concept represented by the word "Trinity" does exist in Scripture. The following is what God's Word says about the Trinity:

1) There is one God (Deuteronomy 6:4; 1 Corinthians 8:4; Galatians 3:20; 1 Timothy 2:5).

2) The Trinity consists of three Persons (Genesis 1:1, 26; 3:22; 11:7; Isaiah 6:8, 48:16, 61:1; Matthew 3:16-17, 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14). In Genesis 1:1, the Hebrew plural noun "Elohim" is used. In Genesis 1:26, 3:22, 11:7 and Isaiah 6:8, the plural pronoun for "us" is used. The word "Elohim" and the pronoun "us" are plural forms, definitely referring in the Hebrew language to more than two. While this is not an explicit argument for the Trinity, it does denote the aspect of plurality in God. The Hebrew word for "God," "Elohim," definitely allows for the Trinity.

In Isaiah 48:16 and 61:1, the Son is speaking while making reference to the Father and the Holy Spirit. Compare Isaiah 61:1 to Luke 4:14-19 to see that it is the Son speaking. Matthew 3:16-17 describes the event of Jesus'

baptism. Seen in this passage is God the Holy Spirit descending on God the Son while God the Father proclaims His pleasure in the Son. Matthew 28:19 and 2 Corinthians 13:14 are examples of three distinct Persons in the Trinity.

3) The members of the Trinity are distinguished one from another in various passages. In the Old Testament, “LORD” is distinguished from “Lord” (Genesis 19:24; Hosea 1:4). The LORD has a Son (Psalms 2:7, 12; Proverbs 30:2-4). The Spirit is distinguished from the “LORD” (Numbers 27:18) and from “God” (Psalms 51:10-12). God the Son is distinguished from God the Father (Psalms 45:6-7; Hebrews 1:8-9). In the New Testament, Jesus speaks to the Father about sending a Helper, the Holy Spirit (John 14:16-17). This shows that Jesus did not consider Himself to be the Father or the Holy Spirit. Consider also all the other times in the Gospels where Jesus speaks to the Father. Was He speaking to Himself? No. He spoke to another Person in the Trinity—the Father.

4) Each member of the Trinity is God. The Father is God (John 6:27; Romans 1:7; 1 Peter 1:2). The Son is God (John 1:1, 14; Romans 9:5; Colossians 2:9; Hebrews 1:8; 1 John 5:20). The Holy Spirit is God (Acts 5:3-4; 1 Corinthians 3:16).

5) There is subordination within the Trinity. Scripture shows that the Holy Spirit is subordinate to the Father and the Son, and the Son is subordinate to the Father. This is an internal relationship and does not deny the deity of any Person of the Trinity. This is simply an area which our finite minds cannot understand concerning the infinite God. Concerning the Son see Luke 22:42, John 5:36, John 20:21, and 1 John 4:14. Concerning the Holy Spirit see John 14:16, 14:26, 15:26, 16:7, and especially John 16:13-14.

6) The individual members of the Trinity have different tasks. The Father is the ultimate source or cause of the universe (1 Corinthians 8:6; Revelation 4:11); divine revelation (Revelation 1:1); salvation (John 3:16-17); and Jesus' human works (John 5:17; 14:10). The Father initiates all of these things.

The Son is the agent through whom the Father does the following works: the creation and maintenance of the universe (1 Corinthians 8:6; John 1:3;

Colossians 1:16-17); divine revelation (John 1:1, 16:12-15; Matthew 11:27; Revelation 1:1); and salvation (2 Corinthians 5:19; Matthew 1:21; John 4:42). The Father does all these things through the Son, who functions as His agent.

The Holy Spirit is the means by whom the Father does the following works: creation and maintenance of the universe (Genesis 1:2; Job 26:13; Psalm 104:30); divine revelation (John 16:12-15; Ephesians 3:5; 2 Peter 1:21); salvation (John 3:6; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 1:2); and Jesus' works (Isaiah 61:1; Acts 10:38). Thus, the Father does all these things by the power of the Holy Spirit.

There have been many attempts to develop illustrations of the Trinity. However, none of the popular illustrations are completely accurate. The egg (or apple) fails in that the shell, white, and yolk are parts of the egg, not the egg in themselves, just as the skin, flesh, and seeds of the apple are parts of it, not the apple itself. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not parts of God; each of them is God. The water illustration is somewhat better, but it still fails to adequately describe the Trinity. Liquid, vapor, and ice are forms of water. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not forms of God, each of them is God. So, while these illustrations may give us a picture of the Trinity, the picture is not entirely accurate. An infinite God cannot be fully described by a finite illustration.

The doctrine of the Trinity has been a divisive issue throughout the entire history of the Christian church. While the core aspects of the Trinity are clearly presented in God's Word, some of the side issues are not as explicitly clear. The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God—but there is only one God. That is the biblical doctrine of the Trinity. Beyond that, the issues are, to a certain extent, debatable and non-essential. Rather than attempting to fully define the Trinity with our finite human minds, we would be better served by focusing on the fact of God's greatness and His infinitely higher nature. "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?" (Romans 11:33-34).

Question: Is the deity of Christ Biblical?

AnswerfromGotQuestions.org: In addition to Jesus' specific claims about Himself, His disciples also acknowledged the deity of Christ. They claimed that Jesus had the right to forgive sins something only God can do as it is God who is offended by sin (Acts 5:31; Colossians 3:13; Psalm 130:4; Jeremiah 31:34). In close connection with this last claim, Jesus is also said to be the one who will "judge the living and the dead" (2 Timothy 4:1). Thomas cried out to Jesus, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28). Paul calls Jesus "great God and Savior" (Titus 2:13) and points out that prior to His incarnation Jesus existed in the "form of God" (Philippians 2:5-8). God the Father says regarding Jesus: "Your throne, O God, will last forever and ever" (Hebrews 1:8). John states that "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word [Jesus] was God" (John 1:1). Examples of Scriptures that teach the deity of Christ are many (see Revelation 1:17, 2:8, 22:13; 1 Corinthians 10:4; 1 Peter 2:6-8; Psalm 18:2, 95:1; 1 Peter 5:4; Hebrews 13:20), but even one of these is enough to show that Christ was considered to be God by His followers.

Jesus is also given titles that are unique to YHWH (the formal name of God) in the Old Testament. The Old Testament title "redeemer" (Psalm 130:7; Hosea 13:14) is used of Jesus in the New Testament (Titus 2:13; Revelation 5:9). Jesus is called Immanuel "God with us" in Matthew 1. In Zechariah 12:10, it is YHWH who says, "They will look on me, the one they have pierced." But the New Testament applies this to Jesus' crucifixion (John 19:37; Revelation 1:7). If it is YHWH who is pierced and looked upon, and Jesus was the one pierced and looked upon, then Jesus is YHWH. Paul interprets Isaiah 45:22-23 as applying to Jesus in Philippians 2:10-11. Further, Jesus' name is used alongside God's in prayer "Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Galatians 1:3; Ephesians 1:2). This would be blasphemy if Christ were not deity. The name of Jesus appears with God's in Jesus' command to baptize "in the name [singular] of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19; see also 2 Corinthians 13:14).

Actions that can be accomplished only by God are credited to Jesus. Jesus

not only raised the dead (John 5:21, 11:38-44) and forgave sins (Acts 5:31, 13:38), He created and sustains the universe (John 1:2; Colossians 1:16-17). This becomes even clearer when one considers YHWH said He was alone during creation (Isaiah 44:24). Further, Christ possesses attributes that only deity can have: eternity (John 8:58), omnipresence (Matthew 18:20, 28:20), omniscience (Matthew 16:21), and omnipotence (John 11:38-44).

Now, it is one thing to claim to be God or to fool someone into believing it is true, and something else entirely to prove it to be so. Christ offered many miracles as proof of His claim to deity. Just a few of Jesus' miracles include turning water to wine (John 2:7), walking on water (Matthew 14:25), multiplying physical objects (John 6:11), healing the blind (John 9:7), the lame (Mark 2:3), and the sick (Matthew 9:35; Mark 1:40-42), and even raising people from the dead (John 11:43-44; Luke 7:11-15; Mark 5:35). Moreover, Christ Himself rose from the dead. Far from the so-called dying and rising gods of pagan mythology, nothing like the resurrection is seriously claimed by other religions, and no other claim has as much extra-scriptural confirmation.

There are at least twelve historical facts about Jesus that even non-Christian critical scholars will admit:

1. Jesus died by crucifixion.
2. He was buried.
3. His death caused the disciples to despair and lose hope.
4. Jesus' tomb was discovered (or was claimed to be discovered) to be empty a few days later.
5. The disciples believed they experienced appearances of the risen Jesus.
6. After this, the disciples were transformed from doubters into bold believers.
7. This message was the center of preaching in the early Church.
8. This message was preached in Jerusalem.
9. As a result of this preaching, the Church was born and it grew.
10. Resurrection day, Sunday, replaced the Sabbath (Saturday) as the primary day of worship.
11. James, a skeptic, was converted when he also believed that he saw the resurrected Jesus.

12. Paul, an enemy of Christianity, was converted by an experience which he believed to be an appearance of the risen Jesus.

Even if someone were to object to this specific list, only a few are needed to prove the resurrection and establish the gospel: Jesus' death, burial, resurrection, and appearances (1 Corinthians 15:1-5). While there may be some theories to explain one or two of the above facts, only the resurrection explains and accounts for them all. Critics admit that the disciples claimed they saw the risen Jesus. Neither lies nor hallucinations can transform people the way the resurrection did. First, what would they have had to gain? Christianity was not popular and it certainly did not make them any money. Second, liars do not make good martyrs. There is no better explanation than the resurrection for the disciples' willingness to die horrible deaths for their faith. Yes, many people die for lies that they think are true, but people do not die for what they know is untrue.

In conclusion, Christ claimed He was YHWH, that He was deity (not just "a god" but the one true God); His followers (Jews who would have been terrified of idolatry) believed Him and referred to Him as God. Christ proved His claims to deity through miracles, including the world-altering resurrection. No other hypothesis can explain these facts. Yes, the deity of Christ is biblical.