

Session Four – My God

I Believe In The Trinity?

Let's Remember

Here are the three truths explored so far in this course.

1) God loves me and is serious about me. My righteousness is found in him and not myself

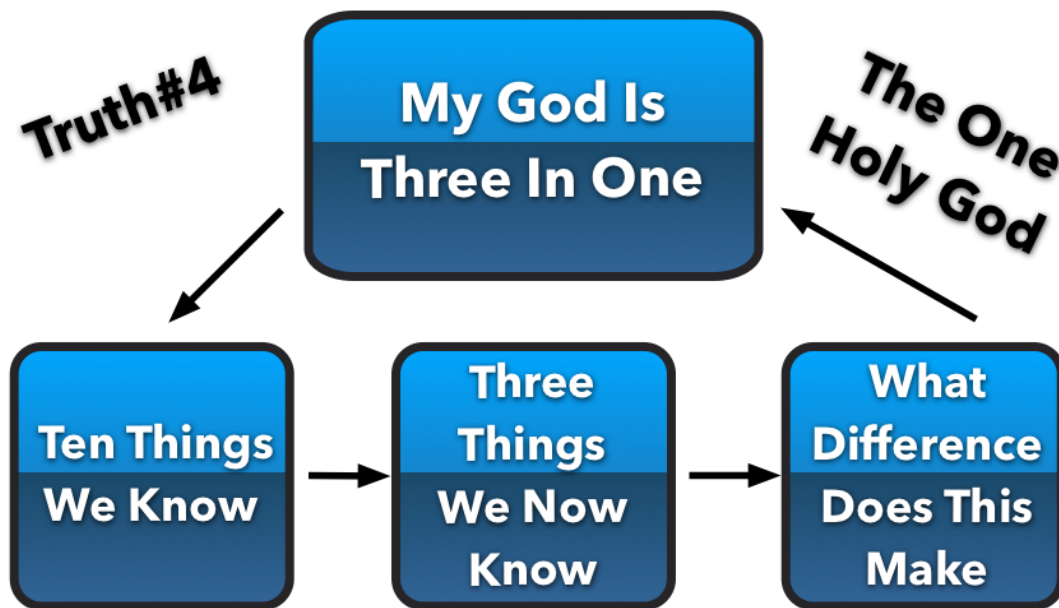
2) Prayer is the natural conclusion of a supreme God who cares. Prayer is faith speaking.

3) My problem is to make following Jesus my first priority. Faith in God is my treasure to be desired above all else.

Let's talk

**You cannot be a Christian without believing in the Trinity.
Discuss.**

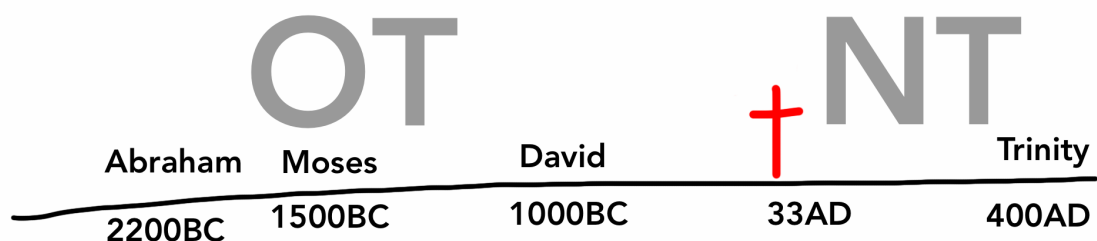
Overview Of This Lesson



My God Is Three In One?

Where did the Trinity come from? This word can't be found on the pages of scripture. But it is a word that has been associated with the Christian understanding of God since very early times. A man named Tertullian used it as early as the 2nd Century and it was formally recognised in the 4th century. Is this teaching made up or elementary?

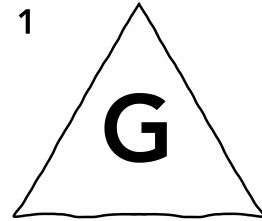
The teaching of the Trinity states that there is only one God; that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are all God; and that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are distinct from each other: Three in unity.



Ten Things We Know

1) There Is Only One God!

Genesis 1:1 opens the entire scriptures with the statement that **"in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth"**. The earth did not come about because of a feud between several gods or because one deity loved another and so on... The heavens and the earth were decidedly made by one God - planned and accomplished.



Exodus 20:3 The ten commandments begins with the declaration that God will not tolerate being shared or compared to any other so-called gods.

Deut 6:4-5 "Hear O Israel the LORD our God, the LORD is one." We are to love him with all our heart, mind and strength.

Isaiah 46:9 "I am God and there is no other; I am God and there is none like me." (Also Isaiah 45:5)

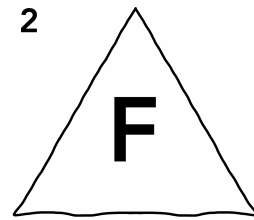
1 Cor 8:4-6 "So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: We know that "An idol is nothing at all in the world" and that **"There is no God but one."** For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"), yet for us **there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live;"**

What This Means For Us

Be clear about this. This is not actually common sense but revelation. God has told us this. There are many religions both now and over the millenniums that serve many gods and goddesses. That there is only one God is a truth given to us by God.

2) The One Jesus Called Father Is God

Matthew 5:44-45 "But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous."



Jesus spoke about the Father who is the universal God.

Matthew 22:31-32 " have you not read what God said to you, I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?"

Jesus believed that God was the same God of the OT.

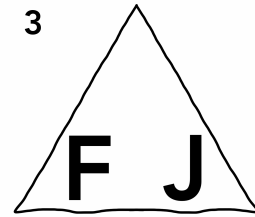
Mark 14:35-36 "Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. "Abba, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me, Yet not what I will, but what you will."

What This Means For Us

The One Jesus called Father is God. **Jesus was a monotheist!** He believed in one true God.

3) Jesus Is God!

John 20:27-29 "Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." Thomas said to him "**My Lord and my God!**"

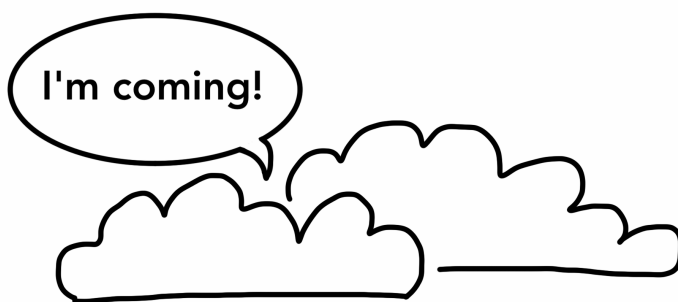


Philippians 2:6 "Christ Jesus, being in very nature God..."

John 1:1 "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

What This Means For Us

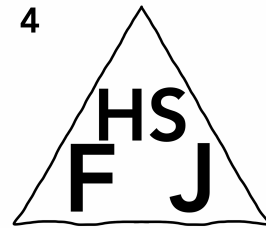
Forget waiting 400 years for the church to adopt the use of a word like Trinity - the disciples were **calling Jesus God from the very day of his resurrection!** These men who were thoroughly Jewish and monotheistic - who knew the first commandment as well as any Jew - worshipped Jesus as God - and Jesus did not stop them!



NB: Malachi 3:1ff refers to God coming and Mark 1:1-8,9 quotes Malachi with reference to Jesus coming!

4) The Holy Spirit Is God

Acts 5:3-4 "Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied just to human beings but to God."



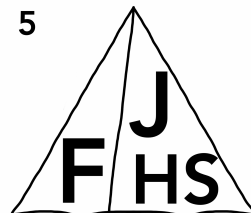
What This Means For Us

The Holy Spirit is not a messenger of God but God himself.

5) Jesus Is Not The Father

John 14:6 "I am the way, the truth and the life. Nobody comes to the Father except through me".

See also Matthew 5:44-45; Mark 14:35-36 above

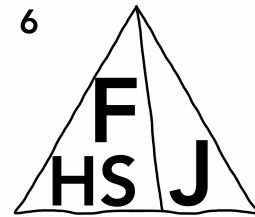


What This Means For Us

Not only did Jesus pray to the Father as separate to him but he claims here to be the one who gives access to the Father. **He is our mediator to the Father.** Jesus and the Father are not the same.

6) The Holy Spirit Is Not Jesus

Romans 8:11 "And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you."

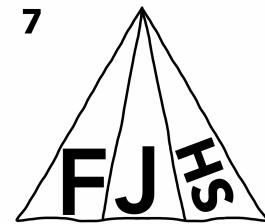


What This Means For Us

The Spirit is the Spirit who raised Jesus Christ from death. The Holy Spirit is not Jesus.

7) The Holy Spirit Is Not The Father

Luke 11:13 "If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"



John 14:26 "The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you."

Acts 2:32-33 "God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear."

What This Means For Us

The Father has gifted the Holy Spirit to us. The description of the Spirit is separate to the Father.

8) Jesus Is The Son Of God The Father

Mark 1:9-11 "At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."



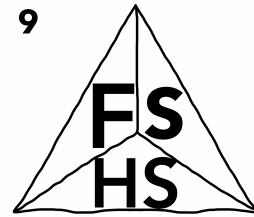
John 17:1-5 "After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: 'Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you have me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.'"

What This Means For Us

Jesus and God the Father have a relationship with one another and that relationship is described in the bible as Father and Son. The Son receives from the Father and gives back to the Father. The Son does the Father's will and the Father gives all that he has to the Son.

9) The Holy Spirit Is The Spirit Of The Father And The Son

John 15:26 "When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father - the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father - he will testify about me."



John 16:13-15 "When he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you."

See also John 14:16-18, 23, 26; 15:7, 26.

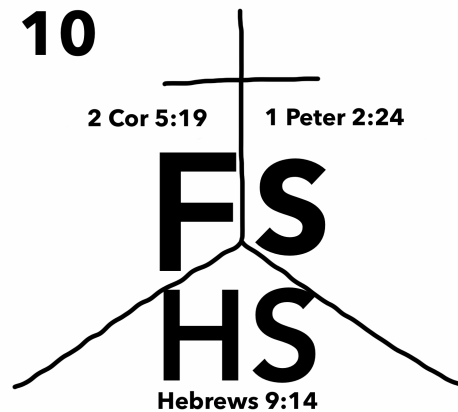
What This Means For Us

Wherever God is at work, the Spirit is at work. We will look at this further when we talk about the Word of God. The Holy Spirit has revealed all that we know about God to us.

10) The Three Are One: Tri-Unity

John 14:10 "Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work."

John 10:30 "I and the Father are one."



The Cross Of Christ - 1 Peter 2:24 *"He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; "by his wounds you have been healed."*

The Cross Of The Father - 2 Corinthians 5:19 *"That God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them."*

The Cross Of The Spirit - Hebrews 9:14 *"How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!"*

What this Means for us

In all the works of God, he cannot be divided - the three are always in unity.

"This is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God" (John 17:3) One key lesson here is that we know God as he has revealed himself to us and in no other way. To know God through any other means is to distort the truth through invention, speculation or deceit.

2) Three Things We Now Know

1) Jesus Is LORD

We are to worship Jesus as LORD. To call Jesus a prophet and stop at that is to treat deity with disrespect. To call him a good teacher and go no further is to abandon the truth and deny his glory.

And to regard Jesus as anything other than LORD is to deny your own faith - you cannot put your hopes in the hands of a mere man when we need God himself to forgive our sins.

2) Matter Does Not Precede Love

It is beyond sad that we live in a material world where possessions come before relationship. But this is not the order of things. Long before anything ever was, God loved the Son. Long after everything is dissolved, the Father will continue to love the Son. And God demonstrates his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us!

3) Being Godly Is About Love – Not Self

John 3:35 "The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands."

John 8:29 "The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him."

Self-ambition and self-centeredness are not present in the Trinity. The three are other-person-centred. They are all servants of one another. To serve is to be most like God.

The Nicene Creed Is A Trinitarian Statement

**We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, light from
light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one
Being with the Father.**

Through him all things were made.

**For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was
incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became
truly human.**

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered
death and was buried.**

**On the third day he rose again in accordance with the
Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right
hand of the Father.**

**He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who
proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father
and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken
through the prophets.**

We believe in one holy universal and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

**We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

What Difference Does This Make To Me?

Read Romans 8¹

What does this chapter tell you about God the Father?

See especially: (1, 4, 33); (3, 32); (7-8); (15); (16); (28); (29-30,33); (31, 37, 39)

What does this chapter tell you about Christ the Son?

(3); (4); (10); (11); (17); (29); (32); (34); (35-39)

What does this chapter tell you about The Spirit?

(2, 10); (4, 5, 6); (9, 11); (11); (14-15); (16); (23); (26, 27).

What does this chapter say about you?

(1); (4); (4-8, 12-13); (9); (10-11); (14-16); (17); (18-25); (26); (28); (29); (31-39)

¹ Read the chapter as a whole first, then re-read for each question and check that you spotted something against the verses listed.

For Next Week

Read John 14-17

What do you notice in these chapters about the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit?

Listen To A Sermon



John Stott, 1921-2011, preached a sermon on the Trinity at All Souls, Langham Place, London. He reminds us how important this teaching is to our Christian faith.

Read Something Great

How can the Trinity be possible? C.S. Lewis was one of the great Christian thinkers of the 20th century. He had a gift for taking what he has read in the Bible about God and life and describing them in practical ways. Here is a whole section from his book, *Mere Christianity*, on the issue of the Trinity.

