

The Trinity - 1 Peter 1:1-17

Jesus said, Whom do men say that I am?

And his disciples answered and said, Some say you are John the Baptist returned from the dead; others say Elias, or other of the old prophets.

And Jesus answered and said, But whom do you say that I am?

Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Logos, existing in the Father as His rationality and then, by an act of His will, being generated, in consideration of the various functions by which God is related to his creation, but only on the fact that Scripture speaks of a Father, and a Son, and a Holy Spirit, each member of the Trinity being coequal with every other member, and each acting inseparably with and interpenetrating every other member, with only an economic subordination within God, but causing no division which would make the substance no longer simple."

And Jesus answering, said, "What?"

On this Sunday, specifically designated as a day to honor the tri-une nature of God, let me declare to you that the idea of one God being made up of three separate yet co-equal persons has caused Christianity and Christians more problems than other concept of the Christian faith.

Muslims accuse Christians of being polytheists (worshipping more than one god). So they respond to us

saying "there is only one god, whose name is Allah, and Mohammed is his prophet.

And though they have never said so out loud, our Jewish brothers and sisters would probably agree. Having come out of a polytheistic culture and having had the concept of the "oneness of God" beaten into their heads and having received strict commandments to worship no other gods.....(period) and that all other gods are made merely wood, or stone, or worse demons.... perhaps belief in the Trinity is now too much to ask of them.

Like Muslims, Jews may be willing to accept Jesus of Nazareth as a great prophet but not as God in the flesh – walking and talking with them.

And we haven't done ourselves any favors in this department either -- many Christians today as in the early days of the faith are functionally "**tri-theists**" (believing in 3 gods), or "**modalists**" (believing that the one God merely took on different forms), or "**secessionists**" believing that that the angry god of the Old Testament having been supplanted by the loving God of the New Testament along with his faithful Sidekick the Holy Spirit.

I don't believe any of those things, you say, how could you accuse me of being tri-theist? Or secessionist: Well let me ask **who do you specifically pray to? God or Jesus?**

Let me point out that when Jesus prayed, he prayed to the Father – and taught us to do the same.

And all those fundamentalist churches who put the words "New Testament" in their name are declaring in some sense their rejection of Old Testament teachings and their belief that somehow God changed when Jesus came on the scene.

And as far as **modalism** goes, you only have to drive a mile down the road to where our Unity Pentecostal friends are building their new Bible Truth Tabernacle to find teachings that essentially God took on the role of Father in the OT, then the Son during Jesus' life on earth, and now the Holy Spirit during the "church age."

To these people I would ask if Jesus was just god in a different form... then who did he pray to when he prayed.

And why did he promise that in the indwelling Holy Spirit – both he and the Father would also always be present in the believers life?

I know the concept of the Trinity is confusing, but let us in these few moments get at least get started off on the right foot in thinking about the threeness and yet oneness of God.

So the first question to ask is who first introduced this idea of Three persons in one God?

And the answer is that Jesus did. And he very rightly declared that had the Jews of his day paid attention, they would have seen all the hints of the Trinity of God in their own Scriptures.

True, the Hebrew people came out of a multi-god culture. They had regional gods, and river gods, and fire gods, and even king gods, often in competition with one another.

And the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – really did have to beat it into their heads that there was only one God who ruled over everything.

That is why the Hebrew Scriptures (our Old Testament) are filled with such commands as...

- Deuteronomy 6:4 (NIV) Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.
- Deuteronomy 32:39 See now that I, even I, am he; there is no god besides me.
- Isaiah 43:10 (NIV) . . . Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me.

And yet at the same time you see all these hints that the singular God – whom the Hebrews worshipped seemingly was more than a single person.

Moses specifically framed the story God's creation of humanity in the plural and singular at the same time (which any language teacher would tell you was a "no no")

Genesis 1:26-30 reads: Then God said, 'Let **us** make humankind (man) in **our** image, according to **our** likeness; ... So God created humankind (man) in **his**

image, in the image of God **he created** them (him) ; male and female he created them.

And as he recorded in the book of Exodus, Moses specifically asked to see the face of God and was told... (EX. 33:20) But, [God] said, 'you cannot see my face; for no one shall see me and live.

But if that is the case, then who was that person who walked up, with two other Angels, and had a lunchtime conversation with Abraham believed it was God -- and God did not correct him. (Genesis 18)

And who was it that wrestled with Jacob – changing his name to "Israel" as a way of blessing him. Jacob was convinced that this was no less than God.

And then there were all those prophecies identifying the Messiah as "the arm of the Lord" (Isaiah 53:1ff). Which the Apostle John noted was fulfilled in Jesus rejection by his fellow Jews (John 12:28)

So Jesus first proved that he was the Messiah – the God promised deliverer – and then carefully began teaching that even though he prayed to the Father – he and the father were the same person. And that anyone who had seen him had seen the father.

And while his disciples finally came to accept this, it was Jesus' claim to also be God that finally pushed the Jews into killing him.

And if the concept of Jesus and the Father being one and the same God were not hard enough... on the night before his death, Jesus then begins talking about "another comforter," whom he called the Holy Spirit, who was going to come in his place. And Jesus said that both the Father and the Son would also be present with them in the person of the Holy Spirit.

And then after his death and resurrection, just before his departure from this planet, Jesus instructed the disciples to teach the world everything he had taught them – and to baptize everyone **in the name** (notice that this is singular – not "names") of the **Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.**

So there you have it. One God in three persons, the blessed Trinity.

Still confusing but a fact the Apostles finally accepted and thereafter taught.

That is why the Apostle Peter opened his letter to the Churches by writing ...

[to the saints] *who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of **God the Father**, through the sanctifying work of the **Spirit**, for obedience to **Jesus Christ** and sprinkling by His blood."*

That is why the Apostle Paul begins his letter to the Church in Ephesus with *Blessed be the **God and Father** of our **Lord Jesus Christ**, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him ... In him*

*[Jesus Christ] you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the **seal of the promised Holy Spirit** (Ephesians 1:1-13)*

So yes, the nature of the Trinity may be hard for us to understand – but not hard for us to accept

The doctrine of the Trinity is as follows: We worship One God, Who is manifest in three distinct Persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. They are equally God in their being, power, holiness and eternity.

God is one in essence and three in Person. They are distinct, yet not solitary. Just like the Musketeers (all for one and one for all) though the three persons of God can relate to the believer in individual ways, to be interacting with any one person of the Trinity is to be doing so with all. So, with the indwelling Holy Spirit, we do not have 1/3rd of God in us but all three persons at the same time. And when we offer our prayers to God, they don't have to be broadcast to some distant location in outer space, we merely have to share them with the Holy Spirit living within – and thus they are laid at the very foot of our father's throne.

There is Father>> who chose us before we chose Him (Eph 1:4).

There is Son>> Who was in there in the very beginning with God and was God and by whom our world was

made. Who became the man Jesus without ceasing to be God. He is 100% God and 100% man at the same time. And this Jesus, God-in-the-flesh who died for us while we were sinners, purchased our salvation through the shedding of His blood (Rom 5:6-10).

And there is also the Spirit>> who in the beginning "brooded over the face of the waters," and in the past inspired the prophets and gave poetry to King David. Who with the departure of Jesus came to abide with all who believed in Jesus - washing, cleansing, sealing, and sanctifying us ... preparing us for God's use (II Thes 2:13).

It is this same Spirit who inspired the writers of Scripture, who now makes those same scriptures understandable to us; who makes the inspired word of God into the living word of God in our lives.

So however you think of the Trinity realize that all three: Father, Son & Spirit make up the **one God** whom we worship

And all three members of the Trinity work to bring us new life
and provide us assurance of our salvation.
And all Three are involved in our daily lives.

So we lift our prayers to God,
sing our praises to God,
and live our lives for the glory of God (Father, Son, & Spirit).

AS a young woman reflected on her journey of faith. She stated: "I got to know God through the three Persons of the Trinity. I first encountered God as Father in church, where I learned that God is holy, deserving of my worship. Later, as a teenager, I became acquainted with Jesus, a man I wanted to follow for the rest of my life. And then—it was almost like a second conversion—I became aware of the power of the Spirit, of God living inside me." Perhaps one of the best descriptions I've heard of the Trinity is this: "3 toll-free numbers that are never busy."