

The biblical truth of the Trinity is succinctly stated in the Apostle's Creed, which was a second-century baptismal formula. This Creed is perhaps the oldest and most familiar Creed in Christendom, primarily stating a belief in the Trinity, but also affirming the life, humanity and works of Jesus, along with a few other basic Christian doctrines.

The Apostles' Creed

The Apostles' Creed is a statement of the Christian faith that has existed since at least the second century. Reading it we find that what we believe today about God and the Trinity has stayed consistent since the time of the earliest churches.

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father Almighty. From there He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy catholic¹ church, the communion of the saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

¹The use of the word "catholic" in the Apostles' Creed does not refer specifically to the Roman Catholic Church; rather catholic in this context refers to the church at large or universal church, from the Greek word "katholou" meaning "universal" or "in general."

Review:

1. How has God revealed Himself as a person in Scripture?
2. Name the 3 Persons of the Trinity, and the general contribution of each Person
3. What is the Apostle's Creed? What does it say about the consistency of what we believe?

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty... And in the Holy Ghost, Lord and Giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father, who with the Father and Son together is worshiped and glorified...

-Nicene Creed

The Trinity

One God, Three Persons

Study #8



The Trinity

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

I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of Truth... (John 14:16-17)

The word “Trinity” is not found in the Bible, but the doctrine is evident in the Bible, as in the passages above. In Scripture God has revealed Himself as a single, unified Being consisting of three Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The three Persons are of the same essence, but they are still distinct, and they interrelate through unity and mutual love (Matthew 3:17; John 14:31). The three Persons are not simply God revealing Himself in different modes (a perspective known as modalism) nor are they separate entities (as taught through Mormonism). A complete understanding of the Trinity is beyond our understanding, but Scripture reveals the distinct relationships of the three Persons.

The persons of the Son and the Holy Spirit proceed from the Father into the world in submission to His will. The distinction between the work of God the Father and the other persons of the Trinity is subtle, since all three always act in unity.

God the Son has always existed; it was near 4 B.C. that He came to earth in the flesh. Jesus Christ was born in Israel and lived there until his death in 30 A.D. On earth, Jesus lived subordinated to the will of God the Father.

According to Scripture, Christ is simultaneously fully man and fully God. Our emphasis should therefore be on both aspects of His nature as well. Understanding the humanity of Christ helps us understand how Christ sympathizes with our struggles, how He lived as an example for us, and how He suffered for our sins. The popular movie, *The Passion*, by Mel Gibson, gave us a graphic depiction of Jesus’ earthly humanity and sufferings.

Understanding the divinity of Christ helps us understand His authority over all creation, His role as a perfect sacrifice and the complete trustworthiness of His message. It also reminds us that God, the Son, was eternally with the Father and will reign forever and ever.

Reference Verses for the Deity and Humanity of Christ

Deity – John 1:1-14, 14:9, 20:29; Philippians 2:9-11; Colossians 1:15-16; Hebrews 1:8-10; 2 John 9-11; Revelation 1:17-18, 17:14, 22:12-33, 20

Humanity – Isaiah 9:6; John 1:1-14; Philippians 2:5-11; 1 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 4:15

The Holy Spirit is God (Acts 5:3-4; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18; 1 John 5:7). He is the Third Person of the Eternal Godhead, who proceeds from the Son and the Father. In the words of J. Rodman Williams, “Whatever the various names or whatever the titles or symbols, all refer to God Himself. The Holy Spirit is not some reality less than God or other than God: He is God” (Renewal Theology, p. 148). In Acts 5, Peter told Ananias that lying to the Holy Spirit is lying to God. The Holy Spirit is God, referred to as the third Person of the Trinity.

The Bible describes the Spirit’s operating in various spheres: in the believer to give understanding, comfort, and peace (John 14:26-27); in the world to convict unbelievers of God’s truth and brings conversion (John 16:8-11); and in the church to provide supernatural giftings to bring unity and to advance God’s purposes (Ephesians 4:11-16). The Holy Spirit continued the work of Jesus after He had returned to the Father (John 16:7).

As we begin to study the Person and doctrine of God, it becomes evident that the Person of the Holy Spirit is often neglected, misunderstood, and improperly represented. Some erroneously refer to the Spirit as “It” or a “force.” Some young Christians have even compared the Holy Spirit with the mysterious “force” from the Star Wars epic series. Many others are unaware of the valuable ministry and presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. As Paul said, “Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you?” (1 Corinthians 6:19). As Christians, God the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in our lives, so that we might live the Christian life in fullness and experience a vital union with God (2 Corinthians 13:14).

In John 16:7-13, Jesus promised that God’s presence would return to His disciples in the Person of the Holy Spirit. Until Jesus comes again, the Holy Spirit will be with us to do the work of God in the earth and to help us live the Christian life in fullness.