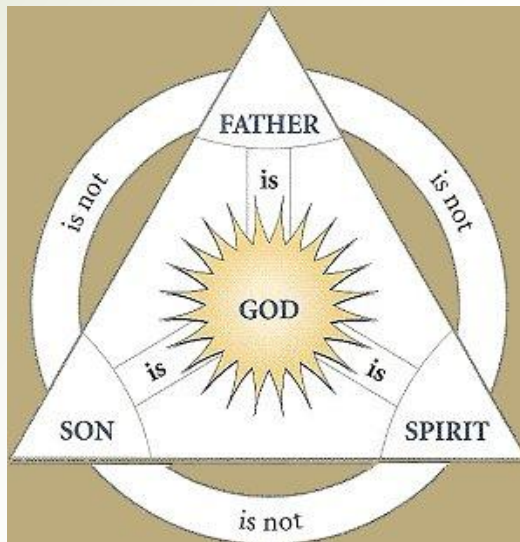


Persons and Beings



Making sense of the Holy Trinity

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What does "Trinity" mean?

Webster's Dictionary defines the word *trinity* as "the state of being threefold or triple" and "the union of three persons (Father, Son, and Holy Ghost) in one Godhead, or the threefold personality of the one Divine Being". In other words, three persons in one being.

A "being" is a quality or substance that makes you **what** you are, while the "person" is the quality or substance that makes you **who** you are. For example, I am a human being. That is **what** I am. I am also Jeff Wagner, and that's **who** I am. As you can see, these are not the same thing. Also note that this isn't a contradiction. One being in three beings would be inconsistent, while one being in three persons is not.

"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

Taking this one step further, I am one person (Jeff Wagner) with one being (human being). God, on the other hand, is one being (God) with three persons (Father, Son, Holy Spirit). Is there anything like that comparable on earth? No. Is it something we're expected to completely comprehend? No. Does that mean it's not possible for God to be one being with three persons? No again.

Role playing

The Bible also indicates that the three persons that make up the being of God have different roles (see item #5 in the next section for scripture references). It can be helpful to understand this better using the following example:

I work at Cisco as a technical writer where John Chambers is the CEO. Mr. Chambers is at the top of the totem pole at the company and I'm at the bottom. Thus, his role is greater than mine. But since we are both human beings, his being is equal to mine. Thus we are equal beings with different roles.

So in the book of John when Jesus (the Son) says "The Father is greater than I", he is basically saying that their being is equal, but their roles are different (i.e. they are equal beings (God); but the Father's role is greater than Jesus').

Note: All of the above was taken from a video representation on the Trinity by Nabeel Qureshi, which can be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/u0JpwOSKRC0>.

What does the Bible say?

First off, the word "Trinity" is not found in Scripture. It is a term that is used to attempt to describe the triune God—three coexistent, co-eternal Persons who make up God. There are several scriptures that support this, but one in particular shows all three in action at the same time....Matthew 3:16-17:

"And when **Jesus** was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the **Spirit** of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, **a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."**

As mentioned earlier, the concept of a holy trinity in Christianity is practically impossible for any human being to fully grasp, let explain. The Bible makes it very clear, however, that there are things in it that we cannot understand, at least not without further revelation. Here are just a few examples:

- ❖ "How impossible it is for us to understand his decisions and his ways!" – Romans 11:33
- ❖ "...so you do not know the activity of God who makes all things." – Eccl. 11:5
- ❖ "Now our knowledge is partial and incomplete..." – 1 Cor. 13:9
- ❖ "The secret things belong to the Lord our God" – Deut. 29:29

The following is what the Bible does reveal about the Trinity. You can click on a link to view the verse.

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.

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 ([Psalm 2:7, 12](#); [Proverbs 30:2-4](#)). The Spirit is distinguished from the "LORD" ([Numbers 27:18](#)) and from "God" ([Psalm 51:10-12](#)). God the Son is distinguished from God the Father ([Psalm 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.

(Resource: "What does the Bible teach about the trinity" (<http://www.gotquestions.org/Trinity-Bible.html>)

Additional scripture

Here are other scripture references that mentions all three persons in the same verse:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth." – **John 1:1-3, 14**

"Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" - **Gen 1:26**

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..." - **Matt. 28:19**

"So when they had come together, they asked him (Jesus), "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."" - **Acts 1:6-8**

"The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him." - **Acts 5:30-32**

Some other ways to look at it

Here are three other analogies that can help us better comprehend the concept of a trinity:

Water	Time	Space
Water is one element that can be in three different forms or states: liquid, solid (ice), or gas (steam). Thus: - Water (God) - Water-liquid (Father) - Water-solid (Son) - Water-gas (Holy Spirit)	Time can be past, present or future. None can exist without the other. Thus: - Time (God) - Time-past (Father) - Time-present (Son) - Time-future (Holy Spirit)	The space around us is measured by height, width and depth (or length). Again, none can exist without the other. Thus: - Space (God) - Space-height (Father) - Space-width (Son) - Space-depth (Holy Spirit)