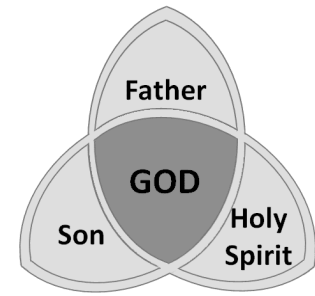


# Is the Godhead a Trinity of Three Equal Persons?

by Roger Day

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The typical teaching of prevailing Christianity is that God is composed of three persons in one being - the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three personages are said to be co-eternal (same agelessness), and co-equal (same power). This concept of God is called "The Trinity" - three equal beings, of one essence, who are not completely separate.



The Bible contradicts several aspects of the trinity teaching. Surely God would not want us to be confused about the personages or nature of God. Let's look into the scriptures concerning this subject.

The Godhead includes God the Father, who is the supreme being and Lord, and his Son, who is the Lord Jesus Christ. These eternal beings pre-existed before the creation of angels, and before the creation of the universe (John 1:1-5; 17:5, 24, Eph 3:8-9, Col 1:15-18, Heb 1:1-2). The Holy Spirit emanates from the Father to minister to those whom the Father has called to be his spiritual children. God is not a single being, nor a personal name, but rather a type of being. Both angels and men are referred to as "sons of God" in scripture. All human beings are God's children, being created in the image of God. And there is a plan by which all of them will have a full opportunity to learn, change, and receive eternal life.

As opposed to the trinity concept of three equal persons in one being, not only is the Holy Spirit not a separate being, but the Father and the Son are not equal. There is a loving Father-Son relationship between God the Father and God the Son (Heb 1:1-5, Matt 11:27, Mark 1:9-11, John 1:14; 3:16; 17:24). The Holy Spirit is a helping, teaching, and comforting spiritual power (Rom 8:26, John 14:26, Acts 1:8). Jesus explained that the Holy Spirit emanates from the Father - it is the Father's spirit. (John 14:16-17; 15:26, Matt 10:19-20). The Father connects with and helps his children grow through his Holy Spirit.

If the Holy Spirit was a separate being, then the Holy Spirit is Jesus' father, since we read that Mary conceived Jesus by the Holy Spirit (Matt 1:20). But in fact we read of Jesus praying to his Father, not to the Holy Spirit (Matt. 11:25-26; 26:39-42, Mark 14:35, Luke 10:21; 22:41; 23:34, 46, John 11:41-42; 12:27-28; 14:16; 17:1-26). So Jesus was conceived by Mary by the power of the Father's Holy Spirit. Of course Christ pre-existed prior to his human birth, and was willing to be emptied of his divinity and power to live as a human being (Phil 2:5-11, John 6:62; 13:2-4; 17:5). So by the power of the Father's Holy Spirit, a human baby grew within Mary, with Christ's pre-existent spirit placed in that baby.

As stated above, the members of the godhead are not equal. If they were, they might have had to flip a coin to determine who would go to earth and live as Jesus Christ. But Christ stated that the Father is greater than the Son (John 14:28). So they are not equal, and this is further supported by the fact that it is the Father who grants authority to the Son (John 5:26-27); that the Son, sent by the Father, does the Father's will (John 5:30; 6:38; 12:44-45; 20:21); and that Jesus did not speak his own words, but the words of the Father who sent him (John 12:49-50; 14:24).

Christ will return to earth and perform his duties to build the Kingdom of God and bring salvation to the unsaved, assisted by saints resurrected at his return. Finally, the Father will arrive on the earth, bringing The New Jerusalem - the city of God (Rev 3:12, 21:2-3). At that time, Christ will present the Kingdom to his Father, and be subject to his Father (1 Cor 15:24-28). The description of this future event clearly confirms that the Father is greater than the Son.

The physical body of the Christian is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19-20). Individuals with the Holy Spirit are assured salvation (Eph 1:13-14; 4:30). Each can one day expect to be born again as a spirit being with eternal life (John 3:5-8, 16). Of course there is a spirit component of every human being (Job 32:8). God's Holy Spirit joins with a person's human spirit to beget them as a child of God (Rom 8:14-16). The saved become the brethren of Christ (Heb 2:10-11).

By understanding that the Holy Spirit is the Father's spirit, we can better understand Matthew 12:31-32, in which Jesus declares, "Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the spirit will not be forgiven men. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come." Jesus was and is the Son of God. But while on earth, he often humbly referred to himself as the Son of Man (as in this scripture), reflecting his human condition. The reason it is worse to blaspheme against the Holy Spirit than against Jesus is because the Holy Spirit is the Father's spirit. Jesus rightly holds his Father higher above all, including himself. The Father abides in individuals through his spirit (1 John 3:24). The Father's spirit is precious - to blaspheme it is unthinkable.

The Holy Spirit is referred to in different New Testament scriptures as both "it" and "he." This derives from the fact that Greek nouns are male, female, or neuter. The correct Greek form of pronoun is typically used in English translations, even though this is totally unnecessary in the English language, which does not attach a gender to a noun. The Greek language uses pronouns which may variably be translated in context to reflect the gender of the noun to which they refer. When the Holy Spirit is characterized as the "Comforter" or the "Helper," the male pronoun, "he" is used in the translation because these Greek nouns are male nouns. But for references to the "Holy Spirit," "it" is used, since "spirit" is a neuter noun in Greek.

The literal translation of the Greek into English has resulted in some confusion. (Had any Greek word used to refer to the Holy Spirit been a female noun, it would have been referenced as "she," causing yet more confusion.) In English, all references to the Holy Spirit need only have used the pronoun "it." It is possible that there was a desire to support the concept of the Holy Spirit as a separate being by translating pronouns for Greek male nouns as "he," in turn seemingly personifying the Holy Spirit as a male being.

Understanding that the Holy Spirit comes from the Father, and that it is a spiritual gift of help, allows one to know that the Holy Spirit is an 'it', not a "he." While some scriptures tend to personify the spirit, this does not mean that it is a separate being. In Proverbs 3:13-18, 8:1-36, and 9:1-12, wisdom is personified as a woman, but that does not make wisdom a real being of independent will and thought. Such personifications are simply part of the elegant literary qualities of the Bible. When we study all scriptures concerning the Holy Spirit, we understand its nature as a spiritual component of understanding, given to each Christian by the Father. It is not a separately-willed god being, divided into millions of pieces.

The Holy Spirit has an association with water, wind, and fire (John 3:5; 7:37-39, Acts 2:1-4, Matt 3:11). It is found in every converted Christian. Paul stated that the mystery of the ages was "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col 1:27). So then how would Christ be in a person? We read that one is Christ's if the spirit that was in Christ also dwells in them (Rom 8:9-11). And what spirit is that? It is the Holy Spirit from the Father. Jesus had that spirit - the Father's spirit - without measure (John 3:34-35).

A principal scripture cited by trinity supporters is 1 John 5:7-8. In many Bibles, it contains wording added in the 14th century, designed to support the trinity concept, here shown in italics, "For there are three that bear witness *in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one.*" Without the added language, it reads, "For there are three that bear witness: the spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one." Bible scholars know the extra wording was added later. Most study Bibles indicate this language does not appear in earlier more trustworthy manuscripts.

The godhead is described in much of John Chapter 1, Hebrews Chapter 1, and Colossians Chapter 1. Reading these chapters is highly recommended, and essential to understanding the nature of the godhead. The book of 1 John also portrays the Father and the Son as separate beings. The Holy Spirit is mentioned only briefly in John Chapter 1, but not as a separate being. It descends upon Jesus at his baptism. Lack of mention and/or emphasis for the Holy Spirit in these chapters is not an accident. The Holy Spirit is not a separate independently willed being of free agency. Instead, it is a spiritual essence from God the Father, by way of which his teaching and direction may be communicated and understood.

Trinitarian teachings do vary. One view is that God is literally a single entity or being with three separate personalities. This view begs some scriptural challenges. Scriptures describe Christ as being at the right hand of the Father (Mark 14:62; 16:19, Acts 2:33-34, Heb 8:1; 12:2). If God is a single being, why must he sit or stand beside himself? And when Jesus prayed to the Father, would he not have actually been praying to another part of himself? Why would that have been necessary, if each were just a part of the same being? When a human being displays more than one personality, this is considered to be a mental disorder. But God is not a single being with a multiple personality mental disorder.

Jesus stated that only the Father knows the day and hour in which Jesus will return to earth (Matt 24:36). But if Jesus is just part of a single God being, how could one part of that being keep a secret from the other two parts of himself? The Bible paints the picture that Jesus was on earth, and the Father was in Heaven during Jesus' first advent. And this will also clearly be the case after Jesus returns as King for the Millennial period. Earlier, it was noted that Jesus will deliver the Kingdom to his Father when his salvific work is complete and the Father arrives to dwell with his children (1 Cor 15:24-28). But if Jesus and the Father are just different manifestations or personalities of a single being, this would represent God presenting the Kingdom from one equal part of himself to another equal part of himself, which would of course seem ludicrous.

If God was a single trinity being, then when Jesus died, they all died, and then how could Jesus have been resurrected by his Father? Likewise, blaspheming the Holy Spirit personality of God would represent blaspheming all three, if they are all part of a single being. Yet, as noted earlier, Jesus stated that blasphemy against himself would be forgiven, but not blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (which is the Father's spirit). As noted at the beginning of this article, more common trinitarian teaching allows some degree of separation of the personages.

The Bible is the written word of God, inspired and made available to we who are the focus of God's creation. We should expect that this written word would reveal the personages and nature of God. And if one studies the Bible without preconception, the nature and qualities of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are clearly evident. The concept of God being a single trinity being, consisting of three equal personages, is simply not supported by scripture.

Despite the trinity teaching, many folks do nevertheless think of the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ as separate beings, not part of a single being, as this is the way scripture reads. Those who seek explanation from clergy as to how God could be three equal persons rolled into one being often receive this type of answer, "This is too difficult for human beings to grasp, and so it should just be accepted on faith." Of course there is clear explanation in the Bible, as presented above. The reader is encouraged to read the scriptural references cited, beginning with John Chapter 1, Hebrews Chapter 1, and Colossians Chapter 1.

The godhead consists of two unequal personages - the Father and the Son - the Father being the greater. The Holy Spirit is the Father's spirit, sent as a gift to help and instruct individuals who are seeking salvation. Identifying the personages of the godhead and the nature of the Holy Spirit is only a starting point. The character of God, to which God's human children should aspire, is also reflected in the scriptures.

The Father and the Son are in harmony - selfless, visionary, determined, and loving - working together for our salvation, not willing that any should be lost (2 Pet 3:9). In that sense, they are one in purpose, and Christ prayed to his Father that we might also be in harmony (John 17:11). Yet, every person does and will remain as an individual being, not absorbed into some other entity, like as happens in some science fiction stories.

May we each one day achieve spiritual harmony with the God who said, "Let us create man in our image, after our likeness..." (Gen 1:26). God intends to have many spirit-born children in his family (1 Cor 15:20-23, Heb 2:10).