

TRIUNE GOD

REVIEW WRITE UP

God is one. Yet God is three. How do we reconcile these two claims? Each of our previous “home studies” have considered the Triune (three but one) nature of God, but it came to a climax last year when asking if the Father forsook the Son on the cross. Sadly, the Trinity of God remains peripheral rather than central to my thought and life. So I would like us to spend a year considering this most important of teachings.

Definition of Terms

Although Christians speak of the *Trinity*, this term is not found in our Bible; this term derives from the Latin word *trinitas*, meaning “threefold.” So when we speak of the *Trinity*, we are making referencing to the threefold nature of God. While helpful, this term misses the oneness of God, so I prefer the term *Triune God*. Triune means “three in one” (i.e., *tri* = three & *une* = one). So this year will consider the *Triunity* of God.

Asking the Right Questions

Much as our definitions will shape our study and the answers we conclude, so we must also ask the right questions. Generally, I have noticed a tendency among Christians to focus on one Person of the Triune God when studying any facet of the nature of God. Yet the Scriptures provide a portrait of the Triune God that is deeply connected. Notice the apostle Paul’s thoughts in Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 4:4-6; & 2 Corinthians 13:14. When thinking about God, Paul is considering not one Person but all three. See also 1 Peter 1:2.

So rather than asking questions that presuppose a division among Father, Son, and Spirit, let us ask questions that recognize the eternal connectedness among them. To talk about worship of the Father is to speak of adoration of Christ. To think of prayer to the Father is to think through praying in the Spirit. To consider regeneration of the Spirit is to consider the sacrifice of the Son. Again, let us ask questions that assume the connectedness rather than the division of Father, Son, and Spirit.

God Is One

The foundational principle of the Old Testament was that “God is one” (Deut. 6:4). Even in the Three Persons of God, He has one name (Mt. 28:19). Yet how can God be one if He is three? The gospel of John helps answer this.

In John 10:30, Jesus made the radical claim, “I and the Father are one.” The Jews understood that this was a statement of equality with the Father, so they took it as heresy. Jesus, quoting from Psalm 82:6, claimed that He was the Son in whom was eternal life while they were but people destined to die (Jn. 10:34-36). What separated Jesus the Christ from people? Eternal life (Jn. 10:28).

This eternal life is the eternal communion among the Father, Son, and Spirit. Two later sections of John add additional clarity to this. First, in the “true vine” address in John 15:1-17, Jesus claimed, “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in his love” (Jn. 15:9). Abiding in the love of the Father bound not just the Son to the Father but people to God.

Likewise, Jesus’ high priestly prayer in John 17 offers clarity. Toward the end of the prayer, Jesus says, “...I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me” (Jn. 17:23; see also 17:24, 26). Eternal love connected the Father, Son, and Spirit together in an inseparable essence of life.

Government or Marriage?

Two analogies may help to understand this profound truth. Is the Triunity of God more similar to a marriage or to the federal government? The federal government has three branches yet is one government; however, the foundation of this structure is the separation of powers. The judicial must not be the legislative, and neither must be the executive. Central to the federal government is separation. A healthy marriage, however, is built on love. When two people have loved one another for decades, they build one life together. Their phrases, thoughts, actions, intentions, and plans start to become one. The Father, Son, and Spirit have co-existed in an eternal communion of love, which is eternal life. They love one another so much that they have always been and always will be one. They are one through love. We are welcomed into the love of God, which is to be welcomed into the life of God.

As a second analogy, let’s turn to geometry. When an equilateral triangle spins, it looks like a circle. We see this in a fidget spinner. What makes a triangle become a

circle? Connection and movement. The Father, Son, and Spirit are three distinct persons, yet their love for one another is so intense and eternal that we have but one God. Love makes three into one.

One Being, Three Persons

So then let us conclude emphatically with faith that God is one! God shares one love. God shares one life. God is one! The Father, Son, and Spirit differ from one another only in relation to one another. Returning to John 15 and 17, the distinctions among Father, Son, and Spirit derive not from differences in will or truth but in relationship. The Father is not the Son, and neither is the Spirit. Each shares a unique relationship with the other two. Yet how fascinating this is! Even the distinctions in relationships still concern their relatedness to one another! God is one. Concisely, we can conclude that God is *One Being in Three Persons*.

