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Why Belief in the Trinity is Essential in Christianity
Part 4 - The Biblical Basis for the Trinity

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In this installment, as in the last, we will continue to survey the broad biblical testimony for the historic Trinity doctrine. As we said before, the consensus of Scriptural evidence leads to the inevitable conclusion not only that the Trinity is true, but that it is the only possible conclusion the whole Bible allows for the nature of God. We are biblically answering four basic questions that collectively lead to the unequivocal truth of the Trinity. The four questions are these:

1. How many gods are there?
2. Is the Father God?
3. Is the Son (Jesus) God?
4. Is the Holy Spirit a person and is the Holy Spirit God?

In the previous installment we answered questions one and two. We determined that the Bible clearly indicates that there is one and only one infinite and eternal God. We also affirmed that the true God is our Father in Heaven and is the Son's (Jesus) Father in the Godhead. In this part we will examine questions three and four, and then offer some final conclusions about the doctrine of the Trinity.

A recent survey made by LifeWay Research commissioned by Ligonier Ministries measured the

theological awareness of 3,000 random adult Americans. The results were mixed from an evangelical Christian perspective.

Here is a summary of the findings:

- * 63% of Americans agree "God is a perfect being and cannot make a mistake."
- * Two-thirds of Americans (66%) agree "God continues to answer specific prayers."
- * 6-in-10 Americans (60%) agree with the doctrine that says "Jesus is fully God and has a divine nature, and fully man and has a human nature."
- * 19% of Americans agree "Jesus is the first creature created by God."
- * More than two-thirds of adult Americans (68%) agree "Biblical accounts of the physical (bodily) resurrection of Jesus are completely accurate. This event actually occurred."
- * 69% of Americans agree "The Holy Spirit indwells every true Christian."
- * More than 6-in-10 Americans deny the doctrine of the personhood of the Holy Spirit. 64% agree "The Holy Spirit is a force, not a personal being."
- * One quarter of adults in the U.S. admit they are not sure about the heresy "The Holy Spirit is less divine than God the Father and Jesus."

You can see the entire report's results at: www.TheStateOfTheology.com.

Obviously, many Americans are confused about Christian theology, particularly regarding the natures of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. In this installment we will analyze the biblical evidence concerning those two issues in relation to the wider question of the Trinity.

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3. Question Three: Is the Son (Jesus) God?

Answer: The Bible, particularly the consensus of the New Testament (NT), teaches that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is indeed fully God and fully Man.

The question of the full deity of Jesus is probably the most controversial and hotly debated theological issue in the history of Christianity. In the Fourth Century, the conflict reached a crescendo with the heretical teachings of Arius (AD 250-336), an Elder of the church in Alexandria, Egypt. Arius contended that only the Father is fully God and that Jesus was created before the creation of the universe. Before Arius, the consensus assumption by Christians was that Jesus was fully God and equal to the Father. As Arianism spread in the Roman Empire, others adopted his theological position producing division among the churches.

As a result, Emperor Constantine I, who had embraced Christianity as a unifying force in the Roman Empire, called for a council of churches to convene in Nicea in AD 325 to settle the issue. About 300 bishops from across the Roman world attended. Eventually the council decided Arius was wrong and produced the Nicene Creed affirming the full and eternal deity of Christ. Though the council did not address the doctrine of the Trinity per se, its verdict confirmed one crucial aspect of it: Jesus is fully God.

The question of Christ's deity, however, cannot be settled by any council of churches. It must have its basis in the Bible alone to be regarded as true. So let's survey some of the most significant Scriptural passages regarding this issue.

First we turn to the Old Testament (OT) where we can find some evidence of God's coming Son, the Messiah. Consider Proverbs 30:4 where we find the Son of God mentioned in relation to the greatness of God:

4 Who has ascended into heaven and descended?

Who has gathered the wind in His fists?
Who has wrapped the waters in His garment?

Who has established all the ends of the earth?

What is His name or His son's name?
Surely you know!

The Psalms also make mention of The LORD and His "Anointed," a clear reference to the Messiah. One of the most noteworthy is Psalm 2:1-12.

1 Why are the nations in an uproar
And the peoples devising a vain thing?

2 The kings of the earth take their stand
And the rulers take counsel together
Against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying,

3 "Let us tear their fetters apart
And cast away their cords from us!"

4 He who sits in the heavens laughs,
The Lord scoffs at them.

5 Then He will speak to them in His anger

And terrify them in His fury, saying,

6 "But as for Me, I have installed My King

Upon Zion, My holy mountain."

7 "I will surely tell of the decree of the Lord:

He said to Me, 'You are My Son,
Today I have begotten You.

8 'Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance,
And the very ends of the earth as Your possession.

9 'You shall break them with a rod of iron,
You shall shatter them like earthenware.'"

10 Now therefore, O kings, show discernment;

Take warning, O judges of the earth.

11 Worship the Lord with reverence

And rejoice with trembling.

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12 Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish in the way,
For His wrath may soon be kindled.
How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!

Note verse two where the LORD declares that no one can stand against Him and His "Anointed."

2 The kings of the earth take their stand
And the rulers take counsel together
Against the Lord and against His Anointed (Messiah), saying...

Verse seven is a well known Messianic verse.

7 "I will surely tell of the decree of the Lord:
He said to Me, 'You are My Son,
Today I have begotten You.'"

The Apostle Paul, in one of his speeches, quoted this verse and the phrase "begotten you" as a reference to Jesus' resurrection (see Acts 13:33).

Isaiah presents several important texts foreshadowing the coming Messiah. For instance Isaiah 7:14.

14 Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.

Matthew, of course, applies this verse directly to Jesus and His Virgin Birth. The Hebrew name Immanuel means "God is with Us," which Matthew understands is fulfilled in Jesus (see Matthew 1:14).

Another key OT Messianic passage is Isaiah 9:2-9. Verse six particularly identifies the child "born to us" as "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God (El - a name Isaiah uses only to refer to Yahweh), Eternal Father, Prince of Peace."

2 The people who walk in darkness
Will see a great light;
Those who live in a dark land,

The light will shine on them.

3 You shall multiply the nation,
You shall increase their gladness;
They will be glad in Your presence
As with the gladness of harvest,
As men rejoice when they divide the spoil.

4 For You shall break the yoke of their burden and the staff on their shoulders,
The rod of their oppressor, as at the battle of Midian.

5 For every boot of the booted warrior in the battle tumult,
And cloak rolled in blood, will be for burning, fuel for the fire.

6 For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us;
And the government will rest on His shoulders;
And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

7 There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace,
On the throne of David and over his kingdom,
To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness
From then on and forevermore.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this.

The OT contains many more Messianic passages fulfilled in Jesus. But we must turn to the New Testament for a complete biblical identification of just who Jesus was and is.

Perhaps the most important, familiar, and controversial passage regarding the deity of Christ is John 1:1-18.

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. 4 In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. 5 The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. 6 There came a man sent from God, whose name

was John. 7 He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him. 8 He was not the Light, but he came to testify about the Light.

9 There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. 10 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. 11 He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. 12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. 14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. 15 John testified about Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'" 16 For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. 17 For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.

Verse one is as clear a statement of the deity of Christ as found in the Bible. John flashes back to Genesis one, saying "in the beginning was the Word." He means that Jesus, in His preexistent being, was the "Word." "Word" is the usual translation of the Greek term *Logos* which, in the Jewish context, harkens back to the OT concept of the "Word of the LORD" who spoke to the prophets.

Some Unitarians (Jehovah's Witnesses, for example, in their New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures [NWT]), have tried to translate the last phrase of verse one as "the Word was a god" in order to diminish its full implication. They argue that Koine Greek has no indefinite article (a) so it must be added when the context requires it. That is true. However, no credible Greek scholar would agree that an indefinite article is required or even allowed in this verse. The verse incontrovertibly asserts that the Word (the preexistent Jesus) was and is God (*Theos*) Himself.

John goes on in the passage to call Jesus "the Light" testified to by John the Baptist (verses 6-12). Verse ten indicates that "the world was made through Him." John then states that "the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us" This phrase sums up the essential doctrine of the Incarnation of God in Christ.

Note one other important point in this passage. In verse eighteen, John states that "No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him."

"The only begotten (*monogenes*) God" refers back to the Word. It is the same word used in John 3:16 ("...His only begotten Son..."). Some heretical groups (Mormons for example) argue that this phrase proves Jesus was literally sired by God the Father. That view is impossible. "Only begotten" is a common translation of the Greek term *monogenes* and actually means the "the one and only" or "unique," and has no procreative implication.

Another key verse in John's Gospel is John 8:58, "Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I AM.'"

The term "I AM" (*ego eimi*) is a definite allusion to the Old Testament name of God (YHWH), which is a derivative of the word for "I AM" (see Exodus 3:14). In this context, when Jesus identified Himself as "I AM," the Jews immediately recognized His claim to deity, which they regarded as blasphemy. This is evident because they, at once, wanted to stone Him (vs. 59).

Jesus used that same Greek phrase many other times in John's Gospel, often to assert His divine identity (John 6:35, 41, 48, 51; 8:12, 18, 24, 28; 9:5, 9; 10:7, 9, 11, 14, 36; 11:25; 12:26, 32; 13:13, 19, 33; 14:6, 10, 11, 20; 15:5, 18:5, 6, 8, 37).

Perhaps one of Jesus' most blatant claims to deity was in John 10:30, "I and the Father are one."

Again the Jews wanted to stone Him for blasphemy (vs. 31). Note also, the word "one" (*heis*) does not just mean one in purpose or plan, but in essence and full unity of being.

John 17:24 reports that Jesus prayed to the Father and that He knew the Father before the foundation of the world.

"Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world."

Clearly He was with the Father in the Godhead before the creation of the universe.

John 20:28 also reports that when the skeptical disciple Thomas saw the resurrected Jesus he exclaimed,

"My Lord and my God!"

Jesus gladly accepted that title and commended Thomas for his belief.

Another essential passage vindicating Jesus' deity is Colossians 1:15-20.

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. 17 He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. 18 He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. 19 For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, 20 and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

Paul, in this passage, emphasizes the following principles of Jesus' divinity.

1. Jesus is the "image (*eikon*) of God." This means the exact likeness of God. You see Jesus, you see God.

2. Jesus is the "firstborn of all creation." The term translated "firstborn" (*prototokos*) does not mean first born in time, but is a statement of superiority and headship (same is used in Colossians 1:18). Jesus is the head of all creation.

3. Jesus created "all things" in heaven and in earth. The word "all things" (*pas ho*), literally means everything that exists. Not "all [other] things," as the Jehovah's Witnesses assert as they blatantly alter and distort the text in their NWT.

4. Jesus is "before all things." Only God existed before anything was created.

5. Jesus holds "all things" together.

6. Jesus is "the head" (*ho kephal*) of the church.

7. Jesus is "the beginning" the firstborn of the dead. The term translated "beginning" (*arche*) does not just mean beginning in time but is also translated as "ruler," "source," and "origin." This word is also used in Revelation 3:14 to refer to the resurrected Jesus: "The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God." The New International Version says, "the ruler of God's creation...." The full impact of these verses is that Jesus was the very source of creation. Only God could be that source. Jesus was not the first thing created, He was its Cause!

8. The "fullness" (*pleroma*) dwells in Jesus. This means Jesus is fully God. This term is also found in Colossians 2:9:

"For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form."

It does not mean, as Oneness Pentecostals assert, that all of God is only in Jesus. It means that what Deity is, Jesus completely is. It does not mean He alone is all that is Deity.

9. Jesus reconciles "all things to Himself."

Here are some other important verses affirming Jesus' divinity.

In 2 Corinthians 5:18-19, Paul says, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself."

18 Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, 19 namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

In Acts 10:36 Peter declares,

"The word which He sent to the sons of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all)."

The word translated "Lord" (*kyrios*) in the NT is comparable to the OT practice of using LORD (*Adonai*) in place of YHWH, the sacred name of God. When NT writers quoted OT passages, they used the word "Lord" where the word Yahweh was found in the OT Hebrew. More than 400 times in the NT, Lord also is used in reference specifically to Jesus Christ. The implication that they identified Jesus with Yahweh is inescapable.

For instance, Paul, in Romans 10:9 says,

"If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."

.

In 1 Corinthians 8:4-6, Paul states that idols are false and that only one true God exists. In doing so he inserts the fact that Jesus is Lord, clearly equating Him to the Father.

4 Therefore concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and that there is no God but one.

5 For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, 6 yet for us there is but one God, the

Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him.

In 1 Corinthians 12:3, Paul also states:

"No one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit."

No doubt, in those verses, what Paul meant by calling Jesus "Lord" was that Jesus is God!

One of Paul's most powerful statements about Christ's divine nature is found in Philippians 2:5- 11.

5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. 8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

This passage says that Jesus always existed as God but did not "grasp," or "hold on" to it. Rather He "emptied Himself" (*keno heautou*), or let go, of His deity to become a man. This He did in order to die on the cross as an atonement for our sins, and to be raised from the dead. He will again reign as God at which time..."every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord...."

Another clear statement from Paul is found in Titus 2:13,

"Looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus."

Here Paul says plainly that Jesus is "our great God and Savior." It cannot be translated any other way.

One extensive final passage we need to focus on is Hebrews 1:1-14:

1 God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, 2 in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. 3 And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, 4 having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they.

5 For to which of the angels did He ever say,

"You are My Son,

Today I have begotten You"?

And again,

"I will be a Father to Him

And He shall be a Son to Me"?

6 And when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says,

"And let all the angels of God worship Him."

7 And of the angels He says,

"Who makes His angels winds,

And His ministers a flame of fire."

8 But of the Son He says,

"Your throne, O God, is forever and ever,

And the righteous scepter is the scepter of His kingdom.

9 "You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness;

Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You

With the oil of gladness above Your companions."

10 And "You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth,

And the heavens are the works of Your hands;

11 They will perish, but You remain;

And they all will become old like a garment,
12 And like a mantle You will roll them up;
Like a garment they will also be changed.
But You are the same,
And Your years will not come to an end."

13 But to which of the angels has He ever said,
"Sit at My right hand,
Until I make Your enemies
A footstool for Your feet"?

14 Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?

The writer uses numerous OT passages to clarify the deity of Christ. Notice particularly verse three:
"And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His (God) nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power."

Notice also, in verse six, that God tells the angels to worship Jesus. In verse nine he comments:
"But of the Son He says, 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.'"
The writer of Hebrews certainly recognized the full deity of Jesus!

There are many other passages we could survey, but the ones we have listed above are more than sufficient to establish that Jesus was indeed fully God and fully Man. We now turn to the final question of the Trinity.

4. Question Four: Is the Holy Spirit a person and is the Holy Spirit God?

Answer: The Holy Spirit, or the Spirit of God, is a living person and is truly the Infinite and Eternal God, the Third Person of the Trinity.

Someone has said that the two most neglected things in most churches are the third stanza of any hymn and the front pew. I would add a third: God, the Holy Spirit. We pray to the Father and glorify Jesus because of our salvation, but too often ignore the Third Person of the Trinity. As the poll we quoted earlier indicates, most people do not even think the Holy Spirit is a person at all. Rather, they consider him a sort of force or power of God. That actually is the official view of some heretical Unitarian groups like the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Way International. But is it accurate? What does the Bible teach?

In this section we will survey the Bible to determine the answer to the above question. We start with the OT.

In the OT the term "Holy Spirit" is used only a couple of times.

Psalm 51:11 says, in the context of seeking God's forgiveness:
Do not cast me away from Your presence
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.

Isaiah 63:10-11 talks about how rebellion grieves the Holy Spirit.

10 But they rebelled
And grieved His Holy Spirit;
Therefore He turned Himself to become their enemy,
He fought against them.
11 Then His people remembered the days of old, of Moses.
Where is He who brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of His flock?
Where is He who put His Holy Spirit in the midst of them.

While these are the only places the OT uses the term Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God is referenced numerous times. The Hebrew translated "Spirit" is *ruach* and also means wind or breath. We will not examine each and every instance of Spirit's actions in the OT, but here are several notable examples.

In Genesis 1:2 the Spirit is described as moving over the waters in creation.

2 The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.

In 2 Samuel 23:2, King David says he spoke for God under the inspiration of the Spirit of God.

"The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me,
And His word was on my tongue."

Zechariah was under the Spirit's power when he spoke to Zerubbabel in Zechariah 4:6.

6 Then he said to me, "This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel saying, 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the Lord of hosts."

The Judges of Israel were empowered by the Spirit of the Lord to lead and make judgments, as with Othniel in Judges 3:9b-10.

9 Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. 10 The Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he judged Israel.

One key prophetic reference to the Spirit being poured out is Joel 2:28-29 which was quoted by Peter in his Pentecost sermon (see Acts 2:16-21).

28 "It will come about after this
That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind;
And your sons and daughters will prophesy,
Your old men will dream dreams,
Your young men will see visions.

29 "Even on the male and female servants
I will pour out My Spirit in those days."

Many more OT passages address the power and anointing of the Spirit on various people. We do not have space here to study each one, but here is a partial list of relevant passages: Exodus 31:1-6; Isaiah 11:2; 44:3; Job 4:15; 32:8; Psalm 104:29-30; 139:7-8. These passages show how closely related in OT theology was the concept of the Spirit of The Lord to His very being as God.

Now let's turn to the New Testament where we find a fuller understanding of the Holy Spirit's divine nature and identity.

The Gospels all present solid evidence as to the divine nature of the Holy Spirit. We do not have room here to explore them all, but we will consider several of the most significant for our purpose of answering our question.

The Holy Spirit was intimately involved in the events leading up to Jesus' conception and birth, starting with John the Baptist while he was still in his mother's womb in Luke 1:15.

15 For he will be great in the sight of the Lord; and he will drink no wine or liquor, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother's womb.

The Angel Gabriel announced to Mary that she would conceive a child by the power of the Holy Spirit in Luke 1:35.

35 The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.

The Holy Spirit was intrinsically involved in Jesus' ministry as indicated at His baptism in Luke 3:21-22. Note that at Jesus' baptism, all three persons of the Trinity were present, including the Father who voiced His approval on His Son. This presents an inextricable problem for Oneness advocates who maintain that the three manifestations of the one person God occur at different times but never simultaneously.

21 Now when all the people were baptized, Jesus was also baptized, and while He was praying, heaven was opened, 22 and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased."

John's Gospel reveals much about the Holy Spirit's work and nature. Here are some key points.

1. The Holy Spirit is the power that brings rebirth and salvation. In John 3:5-8, Jesus spoke to Nicodemus and said this:

5 "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' 8 The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

2. Jesus indicated that after His departure the Helper (*Paracletos* - an Advocate or one who is called along side of another) would come to empower them (John 14:16-17):

16 I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; 17 that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.

3. Jesus said the Holy Spirit would bring His teachings to their minds (John 14:25-26).

25 "These things I have spoken to you while abiding with you. 26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

4. Jesus says the Holy Spirit will testify of Him to them and then they will testify of Him (John 15:26-27).

26 "When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me, 27 and you will testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning.

5. Jesus says the Holy Spirit will convict the world in three ways: concerning sin; righteousness; and judgment (John 16:6-11).

6 But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. 7 But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. 8 And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; 9 concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; 10 and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; 11 and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.

6. Jesus says the Holy Spirit (who He calls here "The Spirit of Truth") would guide His disciples into all truth and will inspire them to speak to glorify Jesus Himself (John 16:13-15).

13 But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. 14 He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you. 15 All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you.

Notice that in these three chapters of John's Gospel (14-16), where Jesus mentions the work of the Holy Spirit (the Helper), He always refers to the Spirit with the masculine pronoun "He" (*ekeinos*) or "Him" (*autos*). Jesus does not call the Holy Spirit "It," nor does He imply that the Spirit is impersonal. In fact Jesus emphasizes both the divine nature and the personal dimension of the Holy Spirit.

The Greek words translated Holy and Spirit are *hagios* and *pneuma*. The word *pneuma* also means wind or breath. Some anti-trinitarians argue that since *pneuma* is a neuter noun that it must mean the Holy Spirit is not personal. However, just because the noun is a neuter form does not require a neuter impersonal interpretation. The above verses show that Jesus clearly conceived of the Spirit in personal terms.

Here are more clear passages that confirm the personal characteristics of the Holy Spirit. All of the following actions can only be done by persons.

1. The Holy Spirit speaks.

Acts 13:2

2 While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

Revelation 2:7

7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

2. The Holy Spirit intercedes.

Romans 8:26

26 In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

3. The Holy Spirit leads.

Acts 8:29-30

29 Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go up and join this chariot." 30 Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?"

Romans 8:14

14 For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

4. The Holy Spirit commands.

Acts 16:6-8

6 They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia; 7 and after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them; 8 and passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas.

5. The Holy Spirit can be grieved.

Ephesians 4:30

30 Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

6. The Holy Spirit prays to the Father on our behalf.

Romans 8:26-27

26 In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; 27 and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

7. The Holy Spirit bears witness to us that we are God's children and joint heirs with Christ.

Romans 8:16-17

16 The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.

Here are other passages that confirm the Holy Spirit is God.

1. The Holy Spirit is eternal.

Hebrews 9: 14

14 How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

2. The Holy Spirit is omnipresent (everywhere present).

Psalm 139:7-8

7 Where can I go from Your Spirit?

Or where can I flee from Your presence?

8 If I ascend to heaven, You are there;
If I make my bed in *Sheol*, behold, You are there.

3. The Holy Spirit is omniscient (all knowing).

1 Corinthians 2: 10-11

10 For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.

11 For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.

4. The Holy Spirit is the Creator.

Genesis 1: 1-2

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.

5. The Holy Spirit is called Lord (*kyrios*).

2 Corinthians 3: 17-18

17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. 18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

In summary, we can say without fear of contradiction that the consensus teaching of the whole Bible is that the Holy Spirit is both a living Person and is truly the Infinite and Eternal God, the Third Person of the Trinity.

Conclusion

Before we express our ultimate conclusions, we will look at several NT passages that coalesce the Three Persons of the Trinity together.

We previously mentioned that the Three Persons were all present at Jesus' baptism (Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-23).

Paul mentions them all in the context of his teaching on spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:4-6.

4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. 6 There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons.

He mentions them also in 2 Corinthians 1:21-22 in context of the sealing God's Spirit.

21 Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, 22 who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.

Later in that letter, in 2 Corinthians 13:14, Paul issues a beautiful Trinitarian benediction to his readers.

14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.

He told the Galatians (4:4-6) that God sent His Son for their salvation so they can know Him as Father by the Spirit.

4 But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, 5 so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. 6 Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

Paul mentions the Trinity in his statement of Christian unity in Ephesians 4:4-6.

4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord (Jesus), one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

Peter also references the Three Persons in his letters.

In 1 Peter 1:1-2 he addressed his letter mentioning the Trinity:

1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.

He also mentions the Three Persons in 1 Peter 3:18 in reference to Jesus' death and resurrection.

18 For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the Spirit.

Other Trinitarian passages include: Romans 15:15-16; 1 Corinthians 2:1-5; 6:9-11; 2 Corinthians 3:2-3; 1 Thessalonians 1:1-5; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Titus 3:4-7; 1 John 4:10-15; Jude 20-21; Revelation 1:4-6.

(Note: Some Christians quote 1 John 5:7-8 from the King James Version (KJV) as evidence for the Trinity: "7 For there are three that bear record [in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. 8 And there are three that bear witness in earth,] the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.")

However, the section of that verse in the KJV that is bracketed above is regarded as a late scribal addition and not authentic by the vast majority of textual scholars. The NASB translates it: "8 For there are three that testify [or bear witness]: the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.")

We close with Jesus' final statement, the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20, wherein He ties the Persons of the Trinity together to send His followers to make disciples of all nations and to baptize them in the name (singular - not "names") of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Also note that the grammar requires that the "name" applies individually to each of the three separate but equal Persons.

18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

In this and the previous installment we analyzed the biblical evidence concerning the nature and deity of The three Persons of the Trinity. We first affirmed the Bible teaches there is only One God. We then also confirmed that the Bible clearly indicates that the Father is God, that Jesus is fully God, and the Holy Spirit is a person and is God.

This leads to the inevitable question: How can One God also be three persons? The first two parts of this series examined the philosophical issues regarding the mystery of the Trinity. It is difficult (maybe impossible) for humans to fully comprehend that doctrine. Unfortunately, that has caused some to venture into unorthodox views of God. Nonetheless, we must assert that the only way to resolve the dilemma of the equal divinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is to embrace the Trinity! There is no other possible solution.

Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty!
Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee;
Holy, Holy, Holy! Merciful and Mighty!
God over all Who rules eternity!

Holy, Holy, Holy! all the saints adore Thee,
Casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;
Cherubim and Seraphim falling down before Thee,
Which wert, and art, and evermore shalt be.

Holy, Holy, Holy! though the darkness hide Thee,
Though the eye of sinful man Thy glory may not see:
Only Thou art holy, there is none beside Thee,
Perfect in power in love, and purity.

Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty!
All Thy works shall praise thy name in earth and sky and sea;
Holy, Holy, Holy! Merciful and Mighty!
God in Three Persons, blessed Trinity!
Reginald Heber (1783-1826)

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