

Bible Doctrines 1

Session 4 - Theology Proper (Tri-Unity and Names of God)



Bring me a worm that can comprehend a man, and then I will show you a man
that can comprehend the triune God! John Wesley

THE TRI-UNITY OF GOD (*What is the nature of God?*)

I. Intro

- a. Trinity comes from “tri” (3) and “-nity” (unity) meaning Tri-Unity.
- b. The word “Trinity” is not found in Scripture.
- c. Trinity is distinctly Christian in that it is revealed through the Scriptures.
- d. Misinterpretations of the Trinity
 - i. Tri-theism - 3 gods in loose association, sometimes related
 - ii. Modalism - God as one nature, but revealed in different modes
 - iii. Gnostic heresy during Apostolic times - denied Jesus’ deity
 - iv. Arian heresy during Early Church times (300-500 AD) - purported Christ was a creature, an angel who was the highest created being, but not God

II. The Contribution of the Old Testament

- a. The Unity of God
 - i. Deut. 6:4 - “the Shema” - Israel’s basic confession of faith; teaches the unity of God
 - ii. Ex. 20:3; Dt. 4:35; Is. 46:9 - all insist on Israel’s loyalty to one God
- b. Plural Words
 - i. Elohim - the name of God that’s plural (denoting God’s unlimited greatness and supremacy)
 - ii. God speaks of Himself with plural pronouns - Gen. 1:26; 3:22; 11:7; Is. 6:8
 - iii. God uses plural verbs - Gen. 1:26; 11:7
 - iv. These collectively seem to indicate distinctions of Persons, though only plurality, not specifically Trinity.
- c. The Angel of Yahweh - sometimes referred to as God, yet is distinguished from Him (Gen. 16:7-13; 18:1-21). This points to personal distinctions in the Godhead.
- d. Distinction of Persons
 - i. Person - not the ordinary meaning, but inseparable, interdependent, and eternally united in One Divine Being
 - ii. The Lord is distinguished from the Lord (Hos. 1:7)
 - iii. The Redeemer (who must be divine) is distinguished from the Lord (Is. 59:20)
 - iv. The Spirit is distinguished from the Lord (Is. 48:16; 59:21; 63:9-10)
- e. The OT contains “genuine *suggestions* of the Persons that make up the Godhead” (Payne, p. 166).

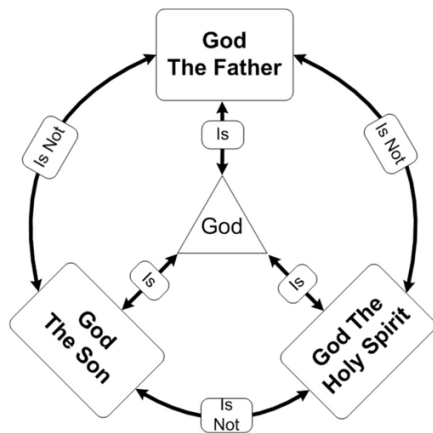
III. The Contribution of the New Testament

- a. Evidence for Oneness - 1 Cor. 8:4-6; Eph. 4:3-6; James 2:19
- b. Evidence for Threeness

- i. The Father is recognized as God - John 6:27; 1 Pet. 1:2
 - ii. Jesus Christ is recognized as God
 - 1. He claimed attributes which only God possess (omniscience - Matt. 9:4; omnipotence - 28:18; omnipresence - v. 20)
 - 2. He did things that only God could do
 - a. Forgave sins (Mark 2:1-12)
 - b. Raised the dead (John 12:9)
 - c. Upholding all things (Col. 1:17)
 - d. Creation (John 1:3)
 - e. Future judge of all (John 5:27)
 - iii. The Holy Spirit is recognized as God
 - 1. He is called God (Acts 5:3-4)
 - 2. He possesses attributes of God (omniscience - 1 Cor. 2:10)
 - 3. He regenerates people (John 3:5-6, 8)
- c. The Evidence for Triunity: Matt. 28:19 - oneness and Threeness

IV. A Definition

“There is one only and true God, but in the unity of the Godhead there are three co-eternal and co-equal Persons, the same in substance but distinct...” Warfield



- There is one God: Deut. 6:4; Isa. 44:6, 24
- The Father is God: John 17:3; 1 Cor. 8:6
- The Son (Jesus) is God: Jn. 20:28; Heb. 1:8; Col. 2:9
- The Holy Spirit is God: Ac. 5:3-4; Heb. 3:7-11
- The Father is Eternal: 1 Cor. 8:6; Mal. 3:6
- The Son is Eternal: Heb. 1:2, 10-12; Col. 1:15-17
- The Holy Spirit is Eternal: Heb. 9:14; Job 33:4; Ps. 104:30
- The Father is NOT the Holy Spirit: Jn. 14:26; 15:26
- The Holy Spirit is NOT the Son: Ac. 10:38; Jn. 16:13-15
- The Son is NOT the Father: Jn. 6:38, 8:16, 8:38, 17:5
- Three DISTINCT Persons: Mt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 4:4-6

THE NAMES OF GOD (What is in a name?)

those who know Your name will put their trust in You – Ps. 9:10a

I. Characteristics of the Names of God

- a. It reveals His character and works.
- b. It is wonderful (Judges 13:18).
- c. The Lord revealed it to Moses (Ex. 33:19).
- d. It was not to be taken lightly (Ex. 20:7; Deut. 5:11).
- e. To call on the name of the Lord was to worship Him as God (Gen. 21:33).
- f. NT: Salvation, gathering, prayer, witness, worship, and suffering were to all be done in the name of the Lord!
- g. At the name of Jesus every knee will bow! (Phil. 2:10-11)

III. Catalog of the Names of God

- A. **Elohim** (not technically a name, but a generic title for a deity)

1. Usage: used generally in the OT to denote deity = 2, 570 times; used about 2, 310 times as a name for the true God
2. Meaning: He is the strong One, the mighty Leader, the supreme Deity
3. Scripture:
 - a. Gen. 1:1
 - b. Used of false deities - Gen. 35:2; Ex. 12:12
4. Compound Names:
 - a. *El-Shaddai* - pictures God as the Almighty One standing on a Mountain; it was the name by which God appeared to the patriarchs to give comfort and confirmation of the covenant (Gen. 17:1; Ps. 91:1-2); also used in the chastening of God's people (Ruth 1:20-21)
 - b. *El Elyon* - "the Most High God", emphasizes God's strength, sovereignty, and supremacy (Gen. 14:19; Is. 14:14; Ps. 9:2)
 - c. *El Olam* - "the Everlasting God", the God of eternity Gen. 21:33; emphasizes his unchangeableness (Ps. 100:5; 103:17) and is connected to inexhaustible strength (Is. 40:28)
 - d. *El Roi* - "the God who sees" Gen. 16:13, Hagar gave this name for God when He spoke to her before Ismael's birth.

B. *Yahweh (YHWH)*

1. Understanding: the personal name for God; "the Lord", or Yahweh. It is the most frequently used name (5, 321 times in the OT). Understood to mean or describe the active, self-existent One. It means, "He will be."
2. Usage: used by Eve, Noah, Abraham, but was revealed to Moses its deepest significance (Ex. 6:3 - patriarchs didn't know Him by His name); fullest meaning came to Moses at the burning bush when God identified Himself as "I AM WHO I AM" (3:14) - principal meaning was He was present with His people, Israel
3. Sacredness: in post-exilic times it began to be considered so sacred that it was not pronounced, in stead the term Adonai was substituted; by the 6-7th centuries A.D., the vowels of Adonai were combined with the consonants YHWH to remind the synagogue leaders to pronounce the sacred name as Adonai...from this came the artificial word *Jehovah*
4. Significance:
 - a. Emphasized God's changeless self-existence (John 8:58)
 - b. It assures God's presence with His people (Ex. 3:12)
 - c. Affirms His covenantal relationship with His people (Ex. 6:6)
5. Compound Names: not technically additional names, but designations or titles that grew out of commemorative events revealing facets of the character of God
 - a. Yahweh Jireh - "the Lord will provide" Gen. 22:14
 - b. Yahweh Nissi - "the Lord is my banner" Ex. 17:15
 - c. Yahweh Shalom - "the Lord is Peace" Judges 6:24
 - d. Yahweh Sabaoth - "the Lord of hosts" 1 Sam. 1:3
 - e. Yahweh Maccaddeshcema - "the Lord your Sanctifier" Ex. 31:13
 - f. Yahweh Roi - "the Lord my Shepherd" Ps. 23
 - g. Yahweh Tsidkenu - "the Lord our righteousness" Jer. 23:6

- h. Yahweh Shammah - “the Lord is there” Ez. 48:35
- i. Yahweh Elohim Israel - “the Lord, the God of Israel” Judges 5:3

C. Adonai

- 1. “Lord, master, owner”
- 2. Scripture: Gen. 19:2; 40:1; 1 Sam. 1:15

D. God (Theos)

- 1. Usage: the most frequent name for God in the NT (Theos)
- 2. Scripture: Rom. 9:5; John 1:1, 18; 20:28; Titus 2:13
- 3. Teaching:
 - a. He is the One True God (Gal. 3:20)
 - b. He is unique. He is the only God (1 Tim. 1:17), the only true God (John 17:3), the only Holy One (Rev. 15:4), and the only wise One (Rom. 16:27). Therefore, believers can have no other gods besides the one true God (Matt. 6:24).

E. LORD (Kurios)

- 1. Usage: Paul (275) and Luke (210) comprise the majority of usages in the 717 usages in the NT as they wrote to the Greeks
- 2. Meaning: emphasizes authority and supremacy with Lordship being emphasized (Col. 3:22)
- 3. Scripture:
 - a. 1 Kings 8:27 - Solomon acknowledges God’s infinity at the dedication of his temple
 - b. Acts 17:24-28 - Paul used it to argue against the false deities of the Athenians
- 4. Observation: Sometimes it is labeled as immensity. Differs from omnipresence (everywhere present) emphasizing His transcendence (not bound by space).

F. Master (Despotes)

- 1. Meaning: connotes the idea of ownership
- 2. Usage: God is addressed in prayer by Simeon as Despot, Peter and those with him (Acts 4:24), and by the martyrs in heaven (Rev. 6:10). Twice Christ is called Despot (2 Pet. 2:1; Jude 4).

G. Father

- 1. “one of the distinctive NT revelations is that of God as Father of individuals” (Ryrie, p. 50)
- 2. Only used of God in the OT 15 times, it occurs 245 times of God in the NT
- 3. He gives His children grace and peace (Eph. 1:2), good gifts (James 1:17) and even commandments (2 John 2:4).
- 4. We are given the opportunity to address Him as Father in prayer (Eph. 2:18; 1 Thes. 3:11)

Summary: In Bible times, a name was more than an identifying tool; it was descriptive of its bearer, often revealing some characteristics of a person.

“O Lord, our Lord, How majestic is Thy name in all the earth.” Ps. 8:1, 9