

Biblical Theology

Unit 2: Doctrine of God – Lesson 8: The Trinity

Summary of the Trinity

1. God is three persons.

- Father, Son, Holy Spirit

- Personal Distinctions Old Testament:
 - *Genesis 1:26 - Let us make man in our image, after our likeness*
 - *Genesis 11:7 - let us go down and there confuse their language*
 - *Isaiah 48:16 - And now the Lord God has sent me, and his Spirit.*
 - *Genesis 16:7-13 – “You [Angel of the Lord] are a God of seeing...*
- Personal Distinctions New Testament
 - *Matthew 3:16-17 - ... Jesus was baptized... 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.”*
 - *Matthew 28:19 - baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.*
 - *2 Corinthians 13:14 - grace of Jesus...love of God...fellowship of Holy Spirit*
- Functional Distinctions
 - *John 14:25-26 - “These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. 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 have said to you.*

2. Each person of the Trinity is fully God.

- Father:
 - Sovereign God, Yahweh (OT), Abba / Father (NT)
- Son:
 - *John 1:1-3 - In the beginning was the Word...with God... was God.*
 - *Isaiah 9:6 - a child is born...Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*
 - *John 20:27-28 - Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!”*
- Holy Spirit:
 - *Acts 5:3-4 - lie to the Holy Spirit ... You have not lied to man but to God.*
 - *Ephesians 4 - There is one one Spirit—one Lord, one faith...*

3. There is one God.

- God is only one being. There are not three Gods. There is only one God.
 - *Isaiah 45:5-6 - ...besides me there is no God*
 - *Deuteronomy 6:4-5 - Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.*
 - *Romans 3:30 - since God is one*
 - *James 2:19 - You believe that God is one; you do well.*
- Necessitates eternal trinity
 - *Colossians 1:16 - For by him [Jesus] all things were created*
 - *Genesis 1:2 - And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.*

Erroneous Doctrines of the Trinity

1. Dynamic Monarchianism / Adoptionism

- Belief that Jesus was normal man and God's presence didn't indwell him until baptism.
- Refuted by numerous passages that place Jesus at beginning of creation.
 - *John 3:16 – For God so loved the world that he gave is only son...*

2. Modalism

- Belief in triune idea of God, but each are functions of God rather than distinct persons.
- Refuted by Baptism of Jesus – Son in water, Dove, Voice of God
 - *John 17:5 - ...with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.*

3. Arianism

- Belief that Jesus existed before creation but was created not equal to God.
- Refuted by:
 - *John 8:48 - Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.*
 - *John 10:28-30 - I and the Father are one."*

4. Subordinationism

- Belief that Jesus is divine, but not equal to father.

5. Tritheism

- Belief in three Gods.

Distinctions and Functions with Trinity

1. Each person of the trinity played a distinct role in **creation**.
 - Father:
 - *Hebrews 11:3 - the universe was formed at God's command*
 - Son:
 - *Colossians 1:16 - For by him [Jesus] all things were created*
 - Spirit:
 - *Genesis 1:2 - And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.*
2. Each person of the trinity plays a distinct role in **redemption**.
 - Father:
 - *Galatians 4:4 - God sent forth his Son, born of woman*
 - Son:
 - *Romans 5:8 - while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*
 - Spirit:
 - *Romans 8:13 – [live] by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body*
3. The Son and the Spirit have **equal deity** to God but **subordinate roles**.
 - Son:
 - *Philippians 2:5-7 - emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant*
 - Spirit:
 - *John 14:25-26 - the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name*

Conclusion

- All analogies fall short.
 - God's being is not divided into three equal parts.
 - Trinity are not added to God's real being.
 - Persons of God are not just different ways of looking at him.
 - Three distinct persons, equally God, as one being/God.

Discussion Questions

1. Do you struggle with the doctrine of the trinity? Explain.
2. Why is it so important to equally consider the three points of the doctrine of the trinity: God is three distinct persons, each person is equally God, there is one God?
3. What parallels to the trinity do we see in the Bible when we are called to relate with our...spouses? Other family members? Church members?

Reading Assignment for April 27th

Systematic Theology by Wayne Grudem – Chapter 15: Creation