

The Baptist Faith And Message

Article 2A: God The Father

God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. He is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, and all wise. God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. He is fatherly in His attitude toward all men.

I. The First Person Of the Trinity

God as Father...

The most difficult thing about the Christian concept of the Trinity is that there is no way to adequately explain it. The Trinity is a concept that is impossible for any human being to fully understand, let alone explain. God is infinitely greater than we are, therefore we should not expect to be able to fully understand Him. The Bible teaches that the Father is God, that Jesus is God, and that the Holy Spirit is God. The Bible also teaches that there is only one God. Though we can understand some facts about the relationship of the different persons of the Trinity to one another, ultimately, it is incomprehensible to the human mind. However, this does not mean it is not true or not based on the teachings of the Bible.

Keep in mind when studying this subject that the word "Trinity" is not used in Scripture. This is a term that is used to attempt to describe the triune God, the fact that there are 3 coexistent, co-eternal persons that make up God. Understand that this is NOT in any way suggesting 3 Gods. The Trinity is 1 God made up of 3 persons. There is nothing wrong with using the term "Trinity" even though the word is not found in the Bible. It is shorter to say the word "Trinity" than to say "3 coexistent, co-eternal persons making up 1 God." If this presents a problem to you, consider this: the word grandfather is not used in the Bible either. Yet, we know there were grandfathers in the Bible. Abraham was the grandfather of Jacob. So don't get hung up on the term "Trinity" itself. What should be of real importance is that the concept that is REPRESENTED by the word "Trinity" does exist in Scripture. With the introduction out of the way, Bible verses will be given in discussion of the Trinity.

Understanding The Trinity

A) There is ONE God: Deuteronomy 6:4; 1 Corinthians 8:4; Galatians 3:20; 1 Timothy 2:5.

B) The Trinity consists of three Persons: Genesis 1:1; 1:26; 3:22; 11:7; Isaiah 6:8; 48:16; 61:1; Matthew 3:16-17; Matt 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14. In the passages in the Old Testament, a knowledge of Hebrew is helpful. In Genesis 1:1, the plural noun "Elohim" is used. In Genesis 1:26; 3:22; 11:7 and Isaiah 6:8, the plural pronoun for "us" is used. That "Elohim" and "us" refer to more than two is WITHOUT question. In English, you only have two forms, singular and plural. In Hebrew, you have three forms: singular, dual, and plural. Dual is for two ONLY. In Hebrew, the dual form is used for things that come in pairs like eyes, ears, and hands. The word "Elohim" and the pronoun "us" are plural forms - definitely more than two - and must be referring to three or more (Father, Son, Holy Spirit).

In Isaiah 48:16 and 61:1, the Son is speaking while making reference to the Father and the Holy Spirit. Compare Isaiah 61:1 to Luke 4:14-19 to see that it is the Son speaking. Matthew 3:16-17 describes the event of Jesus' baptism. Seen in this is God the Holy Spirit descending on God the Son while God the Father proclaims His pleasure in the Son. Matthew 28:19 and 2 Corinthians 13:14 are examples of 3 distinct persons in the Trinity.

C) The members of the Trinity are distinguished one from another in various passages: In the Old Testament, "LORD" is distinguished from "Lord" (Genesis 19:24; Hosea 1:4). The "LORD" has a "Son" (Psalm 2:7, 12; Proverbs 30:2-4). Spirit is distinguished from the "LORD" (Numbers 27:18) and from "God" (Psalm 51:10-12). God the Son is distinguished from God the Father (Psalm 45:6-7; Hebrews 1:8-9). In the New Testament, John 14:16-17 is where Jesus speaks to the Father about sending a Helper, the Holy Spirit. This

shows that Jesus did not consider Himself to be the Father or the Holy Spirit. Consider also all of the other times in the Gospels where Jesus speaks to the Father. Was He speaking to Himself? No. He spoke to another person in the Trinity - the Father.

D) Each member of the Trinity is God: The Father is God: John 6:27; Romans 1:7; 1 Peter 1:2. The Son is God: John 1:1, 14; Romans 9:5; Colossians 2:9; Hebrews 1:8; 1 John 5:20. The Holy Spirit is God: Acts 5:3-4; 1 Corinthians 3:16 (The One who indwells is the Holy Spirit - Romans 8:9; John 14:16-17; Acts 2:1-4).

E) The subordination within the Trinity: Scripture shows that the Holy Spirit is subordinate to the Father and the Son, and the Son is subordinate to the Father. This is an internal relationship, and does not deny the deity of any person of the Trinity. This is simply an area which our finite minds cannot understand concerning the infinite God. Concerning the Son see: Luke 22:42; John 5:36; John 20:21; 1 John 4:14. Concerning the Holy Spirit see: John 14:16; 14:26; 15:26; 16:7 and especially John 16:13-14.

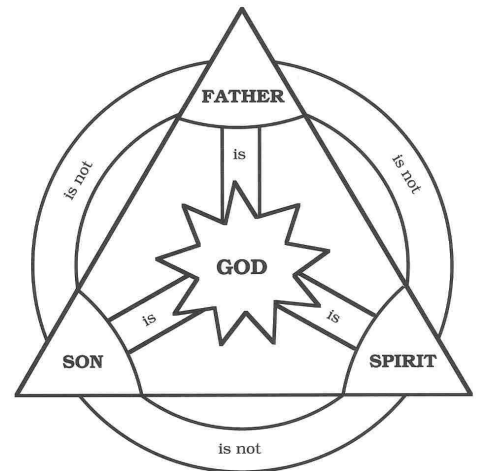
None of the popular illustrations are completely accurate descriptions of the Trinity. The egg (or apple) fails in that the shell, white, and yolk are parts of the egg, not the egg in themselves. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are not parts of God, each of them is God. The water illustration is somewhat better but still fails to adequately describe the Trinity. Liquid, vapor, and ice are forms of water. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not forms of God, each of them is God. So, while these illustrations may give us a picture of the Trinity, the picture is not entirely accurate. An infinite God cannot be fully described by a finite illustration. Instead of focusing on the Trinity, try to focus on the fact of God's greatness and infinitely higher nature than our own. "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?" (Romans 11:33-34)

Below is the best symbol for the Trinity we are aware of:

Inadequate Explanations Of The Trinity

A) Monarchism Monarchianism is the view that Jesus was not in His nature God. It is the view that God existed in Jesus, just as God exists in all of us – but that God existed in Jesus in a particularly powerful way. Jesus was God because God inhabited Him.

B) Modalism (Sabellianism) is the nontrinitarian belief that the Heavenly Father, Resurrected Son and Holy Spirit are different *modes* or *aspects* of one God, as perceived by *the believer*, rather than three distinct persons in *God Himself*. Modalism, is the view that God variously manifested Himself as the Father (primarily in the Old Testament), other times as the Son (primarily from Jesus' conception to His ascension), and other times as the Holy Spirit (primarily after Jesus' ascension into Heaven). God is not three Persons. Rather, Modalistic Monarchianism / Modalism teaches the God has simply revealed Himself in three different modes. Modalism is also known as Sabellianism, named after Sabellius, an influential early proponent of the view.



TD Jakes Statement of Faith: God--There is one God, Creator of all things, infinitely perfect, and eternally existing in three Manifestations: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

II. As Father He Exhibits His PROVIDENCE

Reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history

Etymologically, the word "providence" means foreseeing. From this basic idea has developed the meaning of providing for the future. But in theology, the word has received a more specialized meaning. In this field, providence means that continuous activity of God whereby he makes all the events of the physical, mental and

moral realms work out for his purpose, and this purpose is nothing short of the original design of God in creation. To be sure, evil has entered the universe, but it will not be allowed to overthrow God's plan.

The Scriptures say more about God's work in providence than about his work in creation. They show that God exercises sovereign rule over all the physical universe, over plant and animal creation, over the nations of the earth, and over all individuals.

A. PHYSICAL UNIVERSE: God exhibits his providence over: sunshine (Matt 5:45), wind and waters (Psalm 147:18), lightning and rain (Job 28:25-26, 35), hail (Ps 148:8), snow and ice (Job 37:6, 10). The ground yields its increase at his mandate (Acts 14:17)

B. PLANTS AND ANIMALS: Jonah 4:6, Matthew 6:28-30, fowl – Matt 10:29; Beasts – Ps 104:21; and fish (Jonah 1:17)

C. NATIONS OF THE EARTH: rules over them - Ps 22:28, increases and destroys them - Job 12:23, observes and judges them - Ps 66:7, 75:7; establishes and dethrones rulers – Dan 2:37-39; 4:25; sets national boundaries – Acts 17:26; uses nations and their rulers in the exercise of his will – Isa 7:20; 10:5-15; 45:1-4; All governmental authority is rooted in God – Romans 13:1

D. ALL AREAS OF EACH MAN'S EXISTENCE: Before birth – Ps 139:16, Jeremiah 1:5; Works His purpose out in each life – 1 Sam 16:1, Gal 1:15, Is 45:5, Esth 4:14; Provides for man's needs (Matt 5:45, 6:25-32, Acts 14:17); The circumstances of death – Deut 32:49, John 21:19, 2 Tim 4:6-8; He promotes and demotes people – Ps 75:7; Makes rich and makes poor – 1 Sam 2:6-8; Thinking process – Prov 21:1; The trivial – Matt 10:29; Determines the way the lot falls – Prov 16:33; Gives and withholds sleep – Esth 6:1; Gives safety – Ps 4:8; protects – Ps 121:3; sustains – Ps 63:8; supplies needs – Phil 4:19

Satan implied in his temptation of Eve that God was trying to withhold something good from her and Adam, and he has been endeavoring all along to make men believe that God is doing this. Notice Acts 14:17

III. His MOTIVATION As Father

...according to the purposes of His grace

This phrase in this article speaks to God's motivation for doing all that he does. When Father God exercises his will in his providence, it is not arbitrary or random but intentional. All the ruling and reigning, all the care and concern, providence and prescriptiveness that we see Him exercise is with this primary motivation – the purposes of His grace. Notice four verses in Ephesians 1 that make this abundantly clear:

He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will. Ephesians 1:5

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace. Eph 1:7

He made known to us the mystery of His will according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him. Eph 1:9

Also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will. Eph 1:11

So God is very purposeful, intentional in the exercising of his will as Sovereign Lord and Father. It is never random, accidental, or arbitrary.

IV. His CAPACITY As Father

He is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, and all wise.

It's one thing to desire to govern the affairs of all that exists according to your kindness and graciousness, but it's another thing to have the capacity, the very means to do so. Our Baptist confession identifies four among many attributes of God that clarify His complete capacity to be God the Father.

A. He is Omnipotent

This is all powerful. In other words, he is able to do whatever he wants to do. God's will is limited by his nature. So there are some things that God cannot do such as look with favor on sin, deny himself, lie, tempt or be tempted. This does not mean that he is in some way deficient in power, it simply means that God chooses not to do those things because they are contrary to the kind intention of his will.

B. He is OMNISCIENT

This is all-knowing. He knows all, past, present and future. There is nothing outside his realm of understanding. Because God is outside the realm of time, he is eternal, he sees and knows all things before they even occur.

A great example of God's omniscience is found in a prayer conversation he had with David in 1 Samuel 23:11-13

C. He is LOVE

God's love is matched to his omnipotence perfectly **Page 37**

the co-existence of the power of God and the love of God is a source for debate among atheists and agnostics. The argument is called the problem of evil. Here are three alternatives:

1) God could change everyone's personality so that they cannot sin.

We would not be able to choose right or wrong because we would be "programmed" to only do right. Had God chosen to do this, there would be no meaningful relationships between Him and His creation.

Instead, God made Adam and Eve innocent but with the ability to choose good or evil. In doing so, they could respond to His love and trust Him or choose to do their own thing. They chose to do their own thing. Because we live in a real world where we can choose our actions but not their consequences, their sin affected those who came after them (us). Similarly, our decisions to sin have an impact on us, and those around us.

2) God compensating for people's evil actions through supernatural intervention 100% of the time.

In such a world, God would be like a bad parent who enables a wayward child's destructive behavior. There would be no consequences for one's actions, and as a result no one would learn integrity, purity, honor, responsibility, or self-control. There would be no "good consequences" for right behavior, no "bad consequences" for wrong behavior. What would people become except more deviant and sinful?

3) Another choice would be for God to judge and remove those who choose to commit evil acts. The

problem with this possibility is that there would be no one left, for God would have to remove us all.

Instead God chooses to allow a real world with real consequences for real choices.

D. He Is WISE

V. His DISTINCTION As Father

God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. He is fatherly in His attitude toward all men.

This precludes the idea of universalism. Only those who know Christ can be called the children of God.

John 1:12

God does act fatherly, however to all of his creation, but he only shares the relationship of father with those who are his children.