

We go back to basics tonight, with God himself.

**The evidence for God** There are many things that point to God's existence, some common arguments are;

1. Teleological - Things that are designed, have a designer, e.g. Sir William Paley's pocket watch
2. Cosmological - Cannot get something from nothing, there has to be a 'first cause' – Thomas Aquinas
3. Experience - Many have had a direct experience of God e.g. miracle, voice, changed life. John 9 :25
4. Moral purpose - People have always been aware there are thoughts and actions that are right or wrong. People have an innate love of justice. God is the source of all that
5. The person of Jesus - God became flesh, performed miracles, died and rose again.

### **How do people view God?**

Biblical Christians believe our one God created everything and is above everything. There is a clear separation between Creator and His Creation, but God is involved in our World. However other Worldviews exist.

Deism: Theistic worldview that believes God created the universe, but has not been involved in it since.

Pantheism: pan "all" theism "god." Theistic worldview that believes God is identical with the universe.

Panentheism: pan "all" en "in" theism "god." Theistic worldview that believes the universe is a part of who God is, but is not all that God is.

Polytheism: poly "many" theism "god." Theistic worldview that believes there are many gods.

Pluralism: Worldview that believes all beliefs are ultimately true, even if they are contradictory.

Naturalism: Atheistic worldview that believes nature is the sum total of all reality. Some are Atheists, although they don't believe in God, they can have hope in mankind. Some are Nihilist, with no hope or meaning.

## Questions

How important is it for us to try and understand God?

### **The nature of our God -The Trinity** ( Latin: *Trinitas*, lit. 'triad', from *trinus*, "threefold" )

One God in three Divine Persons. The three persons are distinct, yet are all one in substance, essence and nature (*homoousios* - same essence/stuff). One being, three persons.

We are monotheists (One God) Deuteronomy 4 :35, Psalm 86 :10, 1 Timothy 1 :17, Deuteronomy 6 :4 'God is one'. Hebrew *echad* However word in Hebrew is plural e.g. one bunch of grapes.

'*Echad*' used in Genesis 1 :5, 2 :24 Exodus 26 :6,11 One can contain different elements

Important to note God, is a person, not 'a force'. Cannot have a relationship with force!

Scripture clearly talks about the persons of the trinity without laying it out as a formal doctrine.

2 Corinthians 13:14, Matthew 28 :19, 1 Peter 1;1-2 Jesus is God Matthew 1:23, John 8 :58-59 Titus 2 :13

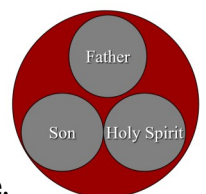
The three persons are seen working together. Genesis 1 :1-2, 26 (plural) Isaiah 61 :1, Matthew 3 :16-17

There is an order within the trinity. John 14 :28, 5 :19 Deference however does not mean of less value.

The doctrine of the Trinity was talked about by Ignatius in 100 AD, later formalised in a systematic way by Tertullian in 200 AD. He was the first to use the word 'trinity'. Included in Church doctrine at Nicaea.

**The logical argument for the trinity.** If God is love, and self love isn't pure love, love has to be giving.

Therefore the trinity must exist, so that love may happen between the persons of the trinity, even before creation. Meaning that love is the greatest reality in the universe. Also God speaks, his nature is to communicate and this happens within the Godhead.



## Major heresies about the Trinity

- a) **Tritheism** There are three 'gods' e.g. Mormons say Jesus was a man who became a god. Beware of 'little gods' idea preached by some in the 'Word Faith' movement
- b) **Modalism** (Sometimes called Modal Monarchism) Sabellius (around 215AD) taught Jesus is of the same stuff as God, but isn't God. Just as sunrays is of the sun, but isn't the sun. They are not three distinct persons, but God acting in different ways. God acted in Father mode in OT, then in Jesus mode, then in Spirit mode. Just like an actor in Greek drama, would play different roles using different masks. Today these ideas are found in 'Jesus only' ( they baptise in the name of Jesus only) or Oneness type of Pentecostalism. Those holding this view sometimes accuse traditional Christians as being Polytheists.
- c) **Arianism** (Sometimes called Dynamic Monarchism) Arius (256-336 AD) taught Father is God, but Jesus isn't. He claimed John 3 :16 teaches Jesus was created by God, and although is the highest created being he did not always exist. The Council of Nicea in 325 AD rejected Arius' teachings and said Jesus was 'begotten not made' Today Jehovah Witnesses teach God created Jesus. Also Unitarians don't believe in the trinity, and can loosely be called Arians.
- d) **Patipassianism** (literally it means 'father suffering') The idea that the Father suffered on the cross as the son. The idea was common in the first three centuries but has resurfaced more recently in the book and film, 'The Shack'. The Bible however does not teach this. Luke 23 :34 and Mark 15 :34 shows the Father and Son were distinct.

## Questions

How would you try and explain the trinity to a non believer?

### The top 10 attributes of God

1. **A Spirit** John 4 :24 Spirit means not confined to a visible body.
2. **A Person** which means
  - a) Self aware The ability to be aware of yourself Exodus 3 :14
  - b) Intelligent Jeremiah 51 :15
  - c) Self determination, the ability to do whatsoever one pleases Job 23 :13
  - d) Emotion Genesis 6 :6, Psalm 103 :13
  - e) Will John 4 :34
3. **Knowable** Romans 1 :19, Hebrews 8 :11 People crave relationship & communication- God given
4. **Omnipotent** (All powerful) Isaiah 46 :10-11 Matthew 19 :26 All powerful means he is sovereign
5. **Omnipresent** (Everywhere) Psalm 139 :7-10
6. **Omniscient** (All knowing) 1 John 3 :20
7. **Independent** Acts 17 :24-25 God does not need his created things.
8. **Unchangeable** James 1 :17 Does God change his mind? Jonah 3 :4,10 Only when situation changed
9. **Infinite** Psalm 90 :2 God is not bound by time, but works in time
10. **Holy** Psalm 99 :9 1 Peter 1 :16



God's very nature contains both unity and diversity, this is reflected in his church 1 Corinthians 12 :12. The church has many gifts, but one mission.

### How we should reflect the Trinity?

We're made in the image of God & should seek to have God like qualities in our own lives. For example;

Loving- Love between persons of the trinity, within God 1 John 4 :8

Communal- We are built for relationships

Humble- Seen in Jesus himself Philipians 2 :5-8

Showing grace and mercy to those around us. Luke 6:36



## Questions

Comments & Questions

Next time - The Bible