

Part 1 – Introduction to the Trinity

Sunday 17 November 2024

Introduction

Perennial problem – thinking God’s like you and me...

Age-old solution – a proper look at how God is different from you and me...

What comes to mind when you hear “the Trinity”?

Overview

Sunday 17 November - Introduction to the Trinity

What does it mean that God is Trinity and how we know this already.

Sunday 24 November - The Trinity and Salvation

How God being Trinity makes all the difference to salvation.

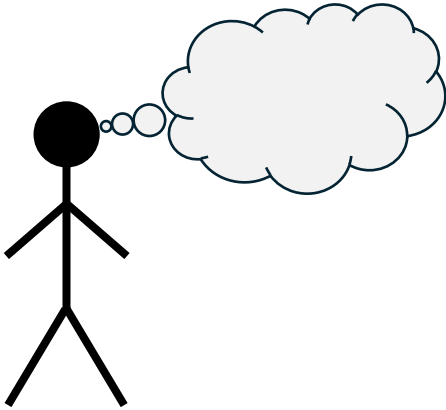
Sunday 1 December - The Trinity and the Christian Life

How God being Trinity makes all the difference to the Christian life.

1. The Trinity what a Christian already knows...

When we start thinking about the Trinity we need to understand that Christians are already connected to and experiencing what it means that God is Trinity.

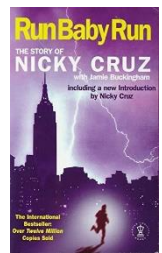
For someone who has become a Christian,
what about the Trinity do they already understand?



(a) Experience of Nicky Cruz

In his book, *The Magnificent Three*, Cruz explains his experience of coming to know God as the Triune God. He said his book is...“a personal testimony, a simple sharing of how God the Magnificent Three live in my life every day.”

- The Magnificent Saviour
- The Magnificent Father
- The Magnificent Holy Spirit



The process of understanding the Trinity:

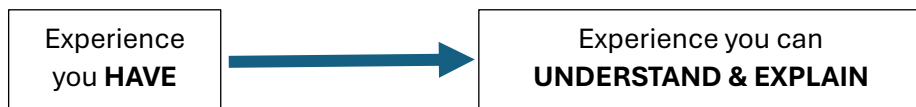
1. A **DIFFICULT DOCTRINE** that needed accepting
2. An **ILLUMINATING DOCTRINE** that explained what he read in his Bible and what he experienced in his Christian life

“I understand that God is so much more to me as Three-in-One than He could ever be in any other way.”

Nicky Cruz

(b) Our Christian experience

It's important to acknowledge our experience of the Trinity as a starting point. Then we can clarify what we have experienced by looking afresh in the Bible.



“You know me better than you think you know, and you shall come to know me better yet.”

Aslan to Frank the Cabbie in *The Magician's Nephew*

“We know more that we can say about the Trinity, and we should not let ourselves be trapped into thinking that everything depends on our ability to articulate the mystery of the triune God.” **Fred Sanders, *Deep things of God*, 42.**

2. Defining the Trinity

(a) Biblical Basis – Old Testament

The Trinity is whispered in the Old Testament

Bible ref. (page no.)	How is the Trinity hinted at?
Genesis 1:26 (3)	
Isaiah 6:8 (692)	
Psalms 110:1 (613)	
Isaiah 63:10 (751)	

*“The Old Testament may be likened to a chamber richly furnished but dimly lit...The mystery of the Trinity is not revealed in the Old Testament; but the mystery of the Trinity underlies the Old Testament revelation, and here and there almost comes into view.” **B. B. Warfield***

(b) Biblical Basis – New Testament

The Trinity is revealed in the New Testament

Bible ref. (page no.)	How is the Trinity revealed?
Mark 1:9-11 (1002)	
Matthew 28:18-19 (1001)	
2 Corinthians 13:14 (1167)	

From whom do God's blessings come to his people? Tick the relevant boxes below.

Bible ref. (page no.)	God the Father	God the Son	God the Holy Spirit
Romans 6:4 (1132)			
1 Corinthians 15:24-28 (1156)			
John 14:16, 18, 23 (1082)			
Acts 16:7 (1111)			
Romans 8:2, 9 (1134)			
2 Corinthians 3:17 (1160)			
Galatians 4:6 (1170)			
Philippians 1:19 (1178)			
1 Peter 1:10 (1222)			
1 Corinthians 1:3 (1144)			
2 Corinthians 1:2 (1159)			
Galatians 1:3 (1168)			
Ephesians 1:3, 6:23-24 (1173)			
1 Thessalonians 1:1 (1186)			
2 Thessalonians 1:2 (1189)			
1 Timothy 1:2 (1191)			
2 Timothy 1:2 (1195)			
Titus 1:4 (1198)			
2 Corinthians 13:14 (1167)			

Which persons of the Trinity are involved in bringing about God’s plan of salvation? Tick the relevant boxes below.

Bible ref. (page no.)	God the Father	God the Son	God the Holy Spirit
Hebrews 2:3-4 (1201)			
Hebrews 6:4-6 (1204)			
Hebrews 9:14 (1207)			
Hebrews 10:29-31 (1208)			
1 Peter 1:2 (1222)			
1 John 4:2 (1227)			
1 John 4:13-14 (1227)			
Jude 20-21 (1231)			
Revelation 1:4-5 (1233)			

People complain that the label “the Trinity” is not in the Bible. However, the reality of the Trinity is there and the label “the Trinity” appears to be the best way to define what we find in the Bible.

(c) Definition of the Trinity

1. God is _____
2. Each person _____
3. There is _____

1. God is _____

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning.

John 1:1-2 (NIV 2011)

But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father – Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.

1 John 2:1b (NIV 2011)

But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

John 14:26 (NIV 2011)

“...the Spirit intercedes for God’s people in accordance with the will of God.”

Romans 8:27b (NIV 2011)

2. Each person _____

(a) God the Father is God – assumed on every page of the Bible

(b) God the Son is God

(c) God the Holy Spirit is God

Bible ref. (page no.)	God the Son is God	God the Holy Spirit is God
Isaiah 9:6 (694)		
Titus 2:13 (1199)		
John 1:1-4 (1063)		
Acts 5:3-4 (1096)		
1 Cor. 3:16 (1146)		

3. There is _____

Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one.

Deuteronomy 6:4 (NIV 2011)

I am the Lord, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God. I will strengthen you, though you have not acknowledged me, ⁶ so that from the rising of the sun to the place of its setting people may know there is none besides me.

I am the Lord, and there is no other.

Isaiah 45:5-6 (NIV 2011)

You shall have no other gods before me. ⁴“You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. ⁵You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God...

Exodus 20:3-5a (NIV 2011)

What illustrations can you think of to picture or explain the Trinity?
Do your illustrations have any weaknesses?

3. Distortions of the Trinity

In the past people have distorted the picture of the Trinity we find in the Bible. Two chief examples.

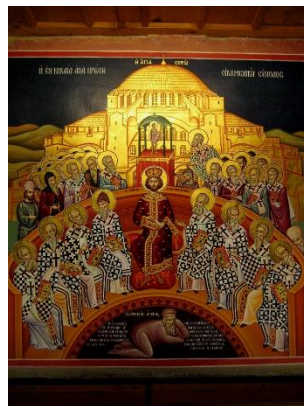
(a) Sabellianism / Modalism

God is one person who appears to us in different forms or wearing different masks.

- a. Emphasises that there is only one God
- b. Denies the relationships within the Trinity

(b) Arianism

Arius, Bishop of Alexandria taught that God the Son was at one point created by God the Father. His teaching was condemned at The Council of Nicea in AD 325 (as depicted).



(c) The Nicene Creed – response to Arius & Arianism

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is,
seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,

of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven,
was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
and was made man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come.
Amen.

When did God begin to be Trinity?

4. The Eternal Trinity

Theologians have distinguished two ways of understanding the Trinity:

- THE **IMMANENT** TRINITY – who God is in himself
 - We learn about this as overhear God the Son speaking with God the Father.
- THE **ECONOMIC** TRINITY – who God is as revealed in his works of *creation, revelation* and *salvation*.
 - We learn about this as we understand the Gospel and as we read the Bible.

Danger: we only ever think about the ECONOMIC Trinity and we don't think about the IMMANENT Trinity. This can be a problem because we think that God's only Trinity in order to rescue us. But that's not the case!

*“The Trinity isn't for anything because the Trinity is God.”
Fred Sanders, Deep Things of God, p68.*

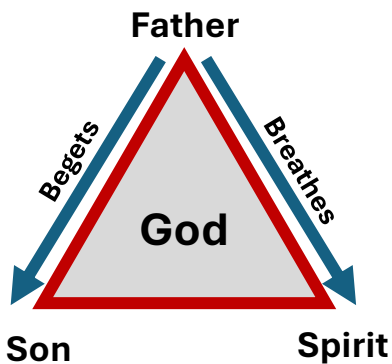
*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God. **John 1:1** (NIV 2011)*

*When Heaven and Earth were yet unmade,
When time was yet unknown,
Thou, in Thy bliss and majesty,
Didst live, and love alone.
by Frederick W. Faber*

Because God is Trinity, he is not dependent on anyone or for anything. And for that reason it's all the more amazing that he would choose to both create us and redeem us. He didn't do it because he needed to. He did it because he loves us.

Such an understanding of the Trinity guards against a wrong understanding of:

- God being lonely
- God's love
- God's glory



Neither the Father's begetting nor his breathing were done "in time". Because both the Son and the Spirit are eternal.