

# School of Theology



## The Trinity



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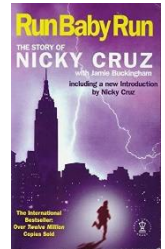
## Part 2 – The Trinity and Salvation

Sunday 24 November 2024

### Recap

Last week we saw...

- A. The Trinity is something a Christian already knows – remember Nicky Cruz?
- B. We define the Trinity with three statements:
  1. God is three persons
  2. Each person is fully God
  3. There is one God



If you were here last week, what stuck in your mind/what was helpful?

### 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. Summary of Trinitarian Theology - the Nicene Creed (AD 325)

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?

## 2. Describing the 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.*

### 3. The Immanent Trinity (or, the Trinity before time began)

Can't use one of these, I'm afraid



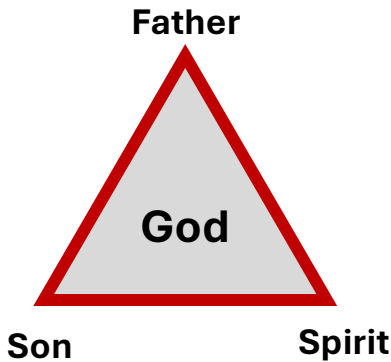
#### (a) The Son inside time

Bible ref. (page no.)	What happened to the Son?
John 1:14 (1063)	
John 3:16 (1066)	
John 20:21(1089)	
Galatians 4:4 (1170)	
Hebrews 1:1 (1201)	
1 John 4:10 (1227)	
1 John 4:14 (1227)	

#### (b) The Son outside of time

Bible ref. (page no.)	Nature of relationship	Time of relationship
John 1:1-3a (1063)		
John 1:18 (1063)		
John 5:19-20 (1068)		
John 17:5 (1085)		
John 17:24 (1085)		
Philippians 2:5-7 (1179)		

The Trinity / the Triune God never had a time when he didn't exist. Before time began he was one God in three persons.



Before the universe began God existed eternally as Trinity. It was a perfect relationship of mutual love and glorification.

**Objection:** "This sounds very technical, is it really necessary?"

**Answer:** Yes!! Before thinking about ourselves we to think about God.

Such an understanding of the Trinity guards against a wrong understanding that God needs us, because:

- God is lonely
- God needs someone to love
- God needs someone to give him glory

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.

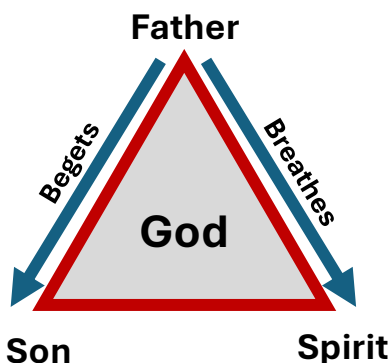
*When Heaven and Earth were yet unmade,  
When time was yet unknown,  
Thou, in Thy bliss and majesty,  
Didst live, and love alone.*  
**Frederick W. Faber**

*The doctrine of the Trinity helps us learn with greater precision- that God is love. The triune God is a love infinitely high above you, eternally preceding you, and welcoming you in.*

**Fred Sanders, *The deep things of God*, 101.**

The fact that God has lived eternally in perfect, loving relationships in the Trinity, makes his love for us all the richer and sweeter. Because it wasn't a love that God needed to share – but he did.

How do we understand the difference between the persons of the Trinity? Through the **names** they are given. Through how their **relationships** are described.



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

**Objection:** But how do we know any of this stuff about God is true?

**Answer:** Because God has stepped into time & space. He has revealed stuff about the IMMANENT Trinity through the ECONOMIC Trinity.

## 4. The Economic Trinity (or, the Trinity after time began)

Now we **can** use one of these...



The Triune God is known through his work in:

- Creation
- Revelation
- Redemption

We're going to focus on redemption / salvation because it's where God is revealed the most clearly.

*“The persons [of the Trinity] in the gospel story are not what the Trinity is like – they are the Trinity.”*

**Fred Sanders, *The deep things of God*, 162.**

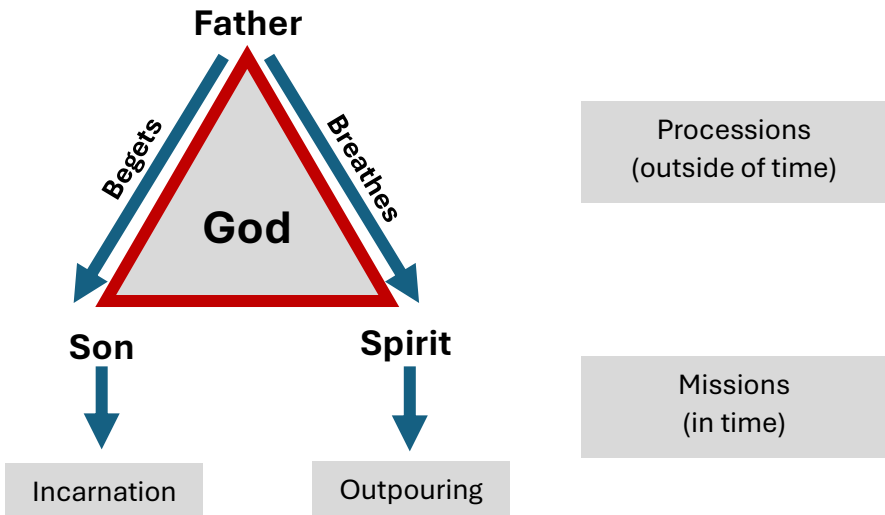
### Ephesians 1:3-14

Divide up the passage below labelling **WHO** is at work in salvation: Father; Son; or Spirit. Then summarise their roles at the bottom of page 8.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. <sup>4</sup> For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love <sup>5</sup> he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will – <sup>6</sup> to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. <sup>7</sup> In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace <sup>8</sup> that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, <sup>9</sup> he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, <sup>10</sup> to be

put into effect when the times reach their fulfilment – to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ. <sup>11</sup> In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, <sup>12</sup> in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. <sup>13</sup> And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, <sup>14</sup> who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession – to the praise of his glory.

- God the Father \_\_\_\_\_ salvation
- God the Son \_\_\_\_\_ salvation
- God the Holy Spirit \_\_\_\_\_ salvation



All three persons of the Trinity are united in providing salvation for you and me, they have different roles.

- God the Father \_\_\_\_\_ salvation
- God the Son \_\_\_\_\_ salvation
- God the Spirit \_\_\_\_\_ salvation

The Work of the Son	The Work of the Spirit
God with us, as one of us	God with us, dwelling among us
Incarnation	Indwelling
Assumes a human nature	Enlivens human persons
Substitutes for you	Regenerates you
Takes your place	Puts you in your place
Completes work all at once	Continues work constantly
Becomes a pattern for imitation	Forms us to fit that pattern
Is the one mediator	Unites us to the mediator
Accomplishes redemption	Applies redemption

They have different roles but the same aims:

- Our salvation
- One another's glory and praise

## (a) Assurance of salvation

In the work of salvation each person in the Trinity is concerned for the glory of the others. Take a look at the passages below to see how this is described.

Bible ref. (page no.)	Who wants to bring glory to whom?
John 8:54 (1074)	
John 11:4 (1077)	
John 12:28 (1080)	
John 13:32 (1082)	
John 14:13 (1082)	
John 15:8 (1083)	
John 16:14 (1084)	
John 17:1 (1085)	
John 17:4 (1085)	
John 17:5 (1085)	
Acts 3:13 (1095)	
1 Peter 4:11 (1220)	

God is doubly committed to the gospel, because it is the means by which he is glorified and we are saved. This should bring us **deep assurance** because of God's deep commitment to the gospel.

*“What amazing security does this view give the whole system of grace, seeing that cannot fail in a single point except through a schism in the Godhead itself.” **Benjamin Morgan Palmer***

## (b) Adoption into sonship

For us to truly understand the Lord Jesus can't simply state that he's "the God who is man" we need also to affirm that he is the Son of God!

*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

**John 1:14 (NIV 2011)**

*For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eye-witnesses of his majesty. <sup>17</sup> He received honour and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.'* **2 Peter 1:16-17 (NIV 2011)**

If we underplay the importance of the Lord Jesus' sonship we are failing on two fronts:

- Failing to honour how God describes the Lord Jesus.
- Undermining our highest privilege as God's people – adoption as sons.

*"For this design the Word made flesh, the Son made man, to make men the sons of God."* **Robert Leighton**

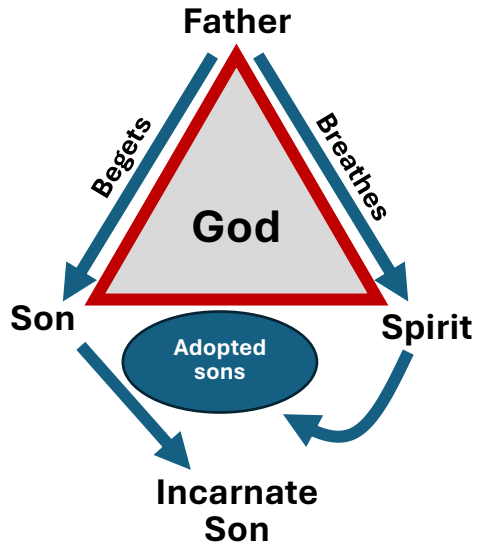
Bible ref. (page no.)	How do these verses describe adoption?
John 1:12-13 (1062)	
Romans 8:15-17 (1135)	
Galatians 3:26-27 (1170)	
Galatians 4:4-6 (1170)	
1 John 2:29-3:1 (1226)	

Our adoption is marked by difference:

- Christ is the Son of God by nature
- We are sons by adoption

Yet, amazingly there's amazing similarity, even sameness, that of relationship of sonship.

*“Adoption is the highest privilege the gospel offers: higher even than justification.” J I Packer*



## Summary

The doctrine of the Trinity deepens our understanding of salvation. It brings greater:

- Sweetness as we grasp God never needed to create nor redeem us.
- Assurance as we see God working for his glory and our salvation in the gospel.
- Wonder that we would be called sons of God.