–Save This Page as a PDF–

Week 7: God the Father and the Trinity

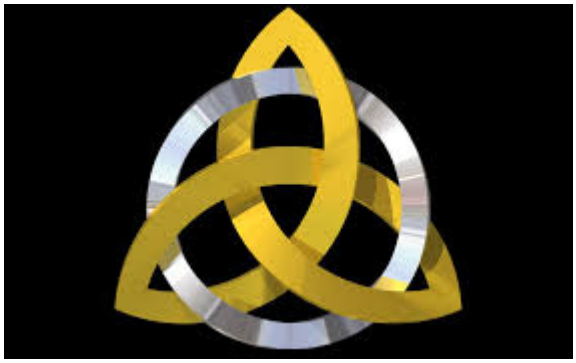
God is able to be known, and at the same time, is full of incomprehensible mystery. One of those mysteries is the plurality of **the Godhead**. Our **God**, the **God** of the Bible, **is one God in three Persons**.

We call this **the Trinity**.

I wish I could eloquently and simply explain the mystery of **the Trinity**, but it is impossible. It's like trying to explain the internet to an ant. But, despite the complexity of the plurality of **the Godhead**, **the Trinity** isn't a liability to our faith; rather, it sets our faith apart from all other religions. Our finite minds can't quite comprehend all of this, but I consider **the Trinity** to be the most beautiful and foundational truth of our faith.

Deuteronomy 6:4 declares: **The LORD our God, the LORD is one** (see my commentary on **Deuteronomy, to see link click Bw – Sh'ma Isra'el**)**.** This is the basis of the Jewish faith, and in the Jewish mind-set, this rules out any possibility of any plurality of **the Godhead**. **The rabbis teach that Yeshua was just a man whom YHVH adopted, and He is basically a Christian invention, and a perversion of the TaNaKh.**

However, believers in **Yeshua** today believe that **Isra'el's God**, **the God** we worship, is distinct and unequaled. **He** is not powerful over just one area of our life, but in all of life. **He** is sovereign, reigning over and in control of all things. **He** is altogether holy and set apart from everything and everyone. There is none like **Him**. Yet, **He** is infinitely faithful, making a way for us to be holy before **Him,** through the ministry of **Himself**, **His Son**, **Yeshua Messiah**, and **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh**. This is the delight and distinctiveness of our faith.



The word **Trinity** is not found in the Bible, but the concept is made clearer as we study the Bible from **Genesis** to **Revelation**. There are a dozen examples of **the Trinity** in the Scriptures, but three in particular are **Isaiah 48:16-17**, **Matthew 28:19, Acts 10:38.** These passages point to **the Trinity** as being active together, each **Person** coequal with the others. Each **Person** is eternal, having existed and will exist forever; being all-knowing (omniscient), all-powerful (omnipotent), ever-present (omnipresent), and unchanging. **They** are perfect in their union, sharing in divine perfection, action, and mission. There is no hierarchy with one Person being more powerful or supreme than the other.

Each **Person** of **the Trinity** is distinct from the others. **The Father** is not **the Son** or **the Spirit**, **the Son** is not **the Spirit** or **the Father**, and **the Spirit** is not **the Father** or **the Son**. **The Father** brings about **the Son**, and **the Spirit** proceeds from **the Father** and **the Son**. **They** are unified, and yet distinct – **one God –** not three gods or three views of one **Person. The Trinity** is an antimony, two things seemingly at odds with each other, but both are true.

They are also distinct in **their** roles. **The Father** exercises the primary role in creation (working with **the Son** and **the Spirit** to create). **The Son** exercises the primary role in salvation (working with **the Father** and **the Spirit** to save). **The Spirit** exercises the primary role in our being set apart for **God's** holy purposes (working with **the Father** and **the Son** in our being conformed into the image of **Christ**).

God chose us in **Him** by **His** eternal plan, sent **Yeshua** to redeem us by shedding **His** blood, then sealed us with **His Spirit** as a down payment of our eternal security. Without the plurality of **the Godhead**, our faith would be in vain.

It's OK to be a little bit baffled about **the Trinity**. It is a mystery that will not be completely understood until we are in heaven. But that doesn't mean we discard or

ignore it. To know **God** is to know **Him** as **the Trinity**. And knowing **the One** we worship helps us to correctly talk about, think about, and praise **Him**. **He** is an incomprehensible mystery, yet close and personal. **He** is **the Father** who generates all life, **the Son** who reveals **the Father** and saves **God's** people, and **the Spirit** who is **the Giver** of eternal life, comfort, and guidance.

ADONAI is three Persons – but one God. There is a plurality of **the Godhead** and this belief can be clearly seen in **the Torah** and is confirmed by **the prophets** and **the writings**.

God the Father: Where does **God** dwell? **The Torah** teaches that **God** dwells in two **Sanctuaries** that exist at the same time without ceasing to be **one God**. One the one hand, after **Moses** oversaw the construction of **the Tabernacle**, **the Sh'khinah glory of God** moved from the top of Mount Sinai into **the Tabernacle** (see the commentary on **Exodus Hh – The Glory of the LORD Filled the Tabernacle**). And **YHVH** spoke to **Moshe** from **the Tabernacle,** and lives with **His people (Leviticus 1:1 and 26:11-12).** On the other hand, accordingly to **Deuteronomy 26:15a**, **YHVH** lives **in heaven** at the same time, saying: **ADONAI looks down from heaven, His holy dwelling place.** Therefore, according to the Torah, **God** lives in two places at the same time. No one would argue that means there are two **Gods**. So **YHVH** can put on **Tabernacle** without ceasing to be **God** above. This argues for a plurality of **the Godhead**.

But we also see this concept in **the prophets** where, in **First Kings 8**, **Solomon** dedicated **the Temple** and **the Presence of God** filled **the Most Holy Place** (see the commentary on **the Life of Solomon Bj – The Ark Brought to the Temple**). **The king** declared that **he** had **built the LORD a magnificent house, a place where YHVH could live forever (First Kings 8:10-13)**. So, according to **Solomon**, **YHVH** lives in **the Most Holy Place**. But throughout **Solomon's** prayer of dedication **he** also pleads that **God** would listen from **His heavenly home (First Kings 8:30, 32, 34, 39, 43, 45,** and **49).** Is **Solomon** contradicting **himself**? Absolutely not! Thus, **ADONAI** was dwelling in **the Temple** and in **heaven** at the same time. Therefore, according to **the Torah** and **the Prophets**, **God** can be in two places at the same time, but still be one **God**!

God the Spirit: Notice that there is a plurality in **the Godhead** in **the Torah**. **Genesis 1:26,** says: **Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.** Here **YHVH** speaks in the plural, **but some of the rabbinic apologists are very quick to say, "Well, of course this can't refer a Divine plurality because God was**

speaking to the angels (Midrash Tanchuma, Shemot 18 and see Genesis Rabbah 8). But the in context of this verse there is no explicit mention of any angels. So who could **God** have been talking to? Was **God** alone in **Genesis Chapter One**? We believe **God is One (Deuteronomy 6:4)**, but **He** is not alone! The answer is in **Genesis 1:1-2, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters." God** is there, and **the Spirit of God** is there.

However, we also see this concept in **the writings** where, **Proverbs 8:27-31** describes **the Spirit** as a **Person**. **"I was there when He set the heavens in place, when He marked out the horizon on the surface of the deep,when He established the clouds above and fixed securely the fountains of the deep, when He gave the sea its boundary so the waters would not overstep His command, and when He marked out the foundations of the earth. Then I was constantly at His side, as a Master Workman. I was filled with delight day after day, rejoicing always in His presence, rejoicing in His whole world and delighting in mankind." Proverbs** makes the relationship between **God the Father** and **God the Spirit** explicit. At the creation of the world, **they**were there together. **God** created the world through **wisdom**. In addition, everywhere in the Bible there is an association between **the Spirit** and **wisdom (Proverbs 3:19; Psalm 104:24** and **30; Job 33:4). In the Jerusalem Targum, Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:27 are combined to say, "In the beginning with wisdom ADONAI created . . . and the Memra of ADONAI created man in His image." In the beginning with wisdom, the son of ADONAI created mankind in His image (Tragum Neofeti).** So you have, in the very first chapter in **the Torah**, a plurality of **the Godhead**.

God the Son: In **the Torah**, we not only see **God the Father**, and **God the Spirit**, but also **God the Son**. In **Exodus 3:2** we read that **the Angel of ADONAI** (see below) **appeared to him in a fire blazing from the middle of a bush. Messiah** is called **the Angel of ADONAI** 58 times and **He** is called **the Angel of God** 11 times. This is never a common angel, but **the second Person of the Trinity, Yeshua.** Thus, is always a reference to the pre-incarnate **Messiah**. Significantly, **the rabbis teach that the phrase the Angel of ADONAI is sometimes used to denote God Himself.** So just like **God** can live in animal skin (see the commentary on **Exodus Fl – The Goat Hair Curtains on the Sanctuary**), **He** can also dwell in **a bush**.

The Angel of ADONAI appeared to Moshe in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush, he looked and saw that although the bush was flaming with fire, yet the bush was not being burned up. Moshe said, "I'm going to go over and see this amazing sight and find out why the bush isn't being burned up." When ADONAI saw that he had gone over to see, God called to him from the middle of the bush, "Moshe! Moshe!" He answered, "Here I am." He said, "Don't come any closer! Take your sandals off your feet, because the place where you are standing is holy ground. I am the God of your father," he continued, "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." Moshe covered his face, because he was afraid to look at God (Exodus 3:2-6). So, the preincarnate **Messiah** appears from the **midst of the bush**, but in the rest of **Chapter Tree**, **God the Father** talks to **Moses**.

But we also see this concept in **the prophets** where, in **Judges 6:12-16**, **when the Angel of ADONIA appeared to Gideon, He said, "The LORD is with you, mighty warrior" (6:12). "Pardon me, my lord," Gideon replied, "but if the LORD is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonders that our ancestors told us about when they** said: **Did not the LORD bring us up out of Egypt? But now He has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian" (6:13). The LORD turned to him and said, "Go in the strength you have and save Isra'el out of Midian's hand. Am I not sending you" (6:14)? "Pardon me, my LORD," Gideon replied, "but how can I save Isra'el? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family" (6:15). The LORD answered him, saying, "I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites, leaving none alive" (6:16).**

The text sometimes identifies the speaker as **the LORD** in **verses 14** and **16,** and **the Angel of ADONAI**, or the pre-incarnate **Messiah** in **verse 12**, and later in **verses 20-21.** Indeed **Gideon's visitor** sometimes speaks in the first person of **the LORD** in **verses 14** and **16**, and sometimes in the third person in **verse 12**. One might want to argue that **the LORD** was located in heaven and spoke through a lower ranking divine being sent to earth with a message, but it is specifically **the LORD** who **turned His face** toward **Gideon** in **verse 14**. At the same time, we are told in **verse 22** that **Gideon** saw **the Angel of ADONAI**, and even though it was **the LORD** who **turned His face** toward **Gideon**, it was **the Angel of ADONAI** who left the place in **verse 21**. All this can be confusing unless you view **the Angel of ADONAI** as being the preincarnate **God the Son**, and **the LORD** as being **God the Father.**

Furthermore, **the Torah** presents **Yeshua** as **a man**. **Now YHVH appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground. He said, "If I have found favor in your eyes,** and identifying one of the three as **my YHVH, do not pass your servant by" . . . then the men turned away and went toward Sodom, but Abraham remained standing before YHVH (Genesis 18:1-3** and **22).** So the Torah teaches that **God** can appear as **a man,** but that didn't prevent **YHVH** from being God in heaven at the same time. Therefore, **the Trinity** is in total conformity with what **the Torah** teaches if you just read what it teaches in context.

And in the B'rit Chadashah, **John** tells us that **in the beginning was the Word, and the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us; and the Word was with God and we have seen His glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father; and the Word was God, full of grace and truth.** How is that different than the Torah? Therefore, according to **the Bible, God tabernacles** in animal skin (see above) and **tabernacles** in human skin **(John 1** and **14).** Finally, the Church has believed in **the Trinity** for 21 Centuries. Cults never believe in the Trinity. Therefore, to be a believer, is to believe in **the Trinity**!

Study questions for Lesson Seven: God the Father and the Trinity

Can **God** be known? *Yes*

Is **God** a mystery? *Yes*

What do we call this mystery? ***The Trinity****, One* ***God*** *in three* ***Persons***

Can our finite minds explain this mystery? *No*

Is the word Trinity found in the Bible? *No*

Then how is the concept made clear? *When we study the Bible from Genesis to Revelation*

What Scriptures point to **the Trinity**? ***Deut 6:4, Isaiah 48:16-17, Matthew 28:19, Acts 10:38***

Is there a hierarchy within **the Trinity**? *No, they are all co-equal*

Is each person of **the Trinity** distinct from each other? *Yes*

Do they have different roles? *Yes*

What is the primary role of **the Father**? ***The Father*** *exercises the primary role in creation*

What is the primary role of **the Son**? ***The Son*** *exercises the primary role in salvation*

What is the primary role of **the Spirit**? *Being set apart for* ***God's*** *holy purposes*

Is it ok to be a little baffled by **the Trinity**? *Yes*

When will we understand it completely? *When we get to heaven*

Can you be a believer and not believe in **the Trinity**? *No!*