

Lord's Day 8 Q 24-25

Q 24 – How are these articles (12 Articles of the Apostle's Creed) Divided?

A – Into three parts: God the Father and our creation; God the Son and our deliverance; God the Holy Spirit and our sanctification

Q 25 – Since there is but one God, why do you speak of three: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

A – Because that is how God has revealed Himself in His word: these three distinct Persons are one, true, eternal God

How well do you know and understand the doctrine of the Trinity?

- How would you define the Trinity if asked by somebody?
- What is the difference between the ontological and functional Trinity?
- Is there one God or 3 Gods?
- If the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are each called God, how can God be one?
- Can you show a person where Jesus is referred to as God in the Bible?
- Can you show a person where the Holy Spirit is referred to as God in the Bible?
- Is there ontological subordination within the Trinity?
- Is there functional subordination within the Trinity?
- Will the Son be functionally subordinate to the Father for all eternity?
- How could Jesus refer to the Father as “God” when He Himself is God?
- What did Jesus mean when He said - “My God my God why have you forsaken me?”
 - Did the Father separate Himself from the Son at that time?

Scriptural Warrant for the Doctrine of the Trinity

The Father is clearly seen as God

Is the Son God?

- **Romans 9:5** – ⁵*To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the **Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.***
- **Hebrews 1:8** – ⁸*But of the Son he says, “Your throne, **O God**, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom.*
- **John 1:1** – *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and **the Word was God***
- **John 20:28** – ²⁸*Thomas answered him, “**My Lord and my God!**”*

Is the Holy Spirit God?

- **Acts 5:3-4** - ³*But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to **lie to the Holy Spirit** and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? ⁴...**You have not lied to man but to God.**”*

- **Hebrews 10:15-16** - ¹⁵ *And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying,*¹⁶ *“This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds,”*

Breaking it Down

- How many Gods do we have?
 - God is one in essence, or nature
 - Essence answers the “what” question
 - Question: What is God?
 - Answer: God is one in His nature
- How many persons do we have?
 - Three individual and distinct Persons
 - Personhood answers the “who” question
 - Question: Who is God?
 - Answer: In the eternal being of God there are three Persons; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit
- How do we come to this conclusion?
 - Through careful reading, exegesis, and interpretation of the Bible by comparing Scripture with Scripture
 - This is our method / approach / hermeneutic

What Do We Learn About God by Comparing Scripture with Scripture?

- **Deuteronomy 6:4** – *“Hear, O Israel: The LORD (Yahweh) our God (Elohim), the LORD (Yahweh) is **one**.”*
 - God / Elohim is the general term used for God
 - Yahweh – is the covenant name of God
 - Deuteronomy 6:4 is saying Yahweh our God is one in essence
 - There is only one true God that exists
 - People can make a god out of almost anything
 - Demons themselves can appear as “gods” in religions such as Hinduism and the New Age
 - This does not make them gods by nature
 - There is only one God by nature
 - That is Yahweh – the one true God of the Bible
- **Eph 4:4-6** – ⁴ *There is one body and **one Spirit**—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call ⁵ **one Lord** (Kurios - Yahweh), one faith, one baptism, ⁶ **one God** (Theos - Elohim) and **Father** of all, who is over all and through all and in all*
- Paul has Deuteronomy 6:4 in mind here
 - One Lord:
 - “Kurios” in the Greek
 - “Yahweh” in Hebrew
 - Paul is saying the same thing Greek that is said in OT Hebrew

- Paul is referring to Jesus as Yahweh
 - Most people associate the name Yahweh to the Father
 - But here, Paul is referring to the Son as Yahweh
 - One God and Father
 - Greek word for God – “Theos”
 - Hebrew word for God – “Elohim”
 - Paul is saying the same thing Greek that is said in OT Hebrew
 - Paul is referring to the Father as God as He is described on the OT
 - But Elohim is the generic way of saying God
 - Yahweh is more specific
 - And Paul refers to Christ by that name
 - Notice each Person of the Trinity is mentioned here
 - And yet Paul refers to God as being one
- **Isa 44:6** – *Thus says the **Lord**, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the **Lord** of hosts: “I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god.*
 - Notice here in this verse
 - The King of Israel is referred to as Yahweh
 - The Father Himself is speaking here
 - But:
 - The Redeemer is also called Yahweh
 - We have Yahweh the King **and** Yahweh the Redeemer
 - 2 distinct Persons – both called Yahweh
 - Yahweh the King speaks in this verse, saying “I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no God”
 - Yahweh the King is saying there is no God (Elohim) but Himself
 - And yet we have 2 distinct Persons
 - Yahweh the King and Yahweh the Redeemer
 - Jesus says the same about Himself in **Revelation 22:13**, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end”
 - Jesus also says in **Revelation 1:8**, “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God”
 - Jesus refers to Himself as the “Yahweh Elohim” in this verse
 - The Greek words being “Kurios” for Lord and “Theos” for God
- **1 Corinthians 8:6** - *yet for us there is one **God** (Theos - Elohim), the **Father**, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one **Lord** (Kurios – Yahweh) **Jesus Christ**, through whom are all things and through whom we exist*
 - Again, Paul has Deuteronomy 6:4 in mind here
- **Matthew 28:18-20** - ¹⁸ *And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the **name** of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*
 - One God – three Persons

Ontological Trinity / Nature / Essence (who they are – president vs citizen)

- All three Persons of the Trinity are:
 - Co-equal
 - All three Persons are equal in rank
 - Co-essential
 - All three Persons share the same essence
 - Co-eternal
 - All three Persons have no beginning or end

Functional / Economic Trinity (roles in redemption – what they do – president vs citizen)

- There are three *distinct Persons* within the Trinity:
 - The first Person of the Trinity = the Father
 - The second Person of the Trinity = the Son
 - The third Person of the Trinity = the Holy Spirit
 - The order is one of *relationship*
 - The order has nothing to do with essence or nature
 - One does not outrank the other – they are all equal
 - They are all the same rank with different roles they chose to take on for the salvation of the elect within the **Eternal Plan of Redemption (Pactum Salutis)**
 - The relationship between the Son and the Father is presented as one in which the Son renders obedience and receives a Spirit-secured reward for that obedience.
- The functional role of the Father in the eternal plan of redemption?
 - Anointer
- The functional role of the Son in the eternal plan of redemption?
 - Anointed
- The functional role of the Spirit in the eternal plan of redemption?
 - Anointing
- Functional Trinity or Ontological Trinity?
 - John 14:28 – *the Father is greater than I*
 - John 14:11 – *I am in the Father and the Father in me*
 - John 5:17-18 – *But Jesus answered them, “My Father is working until now, and I am working.”*
 - Phil 2:7 - *but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men*
 - Rev 3:2 – (Jesus is speaking) *Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God*

Putting it All Together

There is in the divine Being only one indivisible essence

- God is not divided into three parts
 - He is one whole *being*

In the one divine Being of God exist three Persons / individuals = Father / Son / Holy Spirit

- **Person** is different than **substance**
 - Example:
 - A tree –
 - Has substance (hard material) but no person
 - A human –
 - Has both substance and person
 - Within the one God exists 3 Persons, distinct yet united
 - God is one subsistence comprised of three individuals
 - This does not mean God is three separate substances
 - He is one substance
 - God is one subsistence with three persons

The complete nature of God is found equally in each of the three Persons

- The Trinity is not divided up 1/3 or 33% for each person
 - The Father is not 33%
 - The Son is not 33%
 - The Spirit is not 33%
- Rather –
 - The Father is in full possession of the entire being = 100%
 - The Son is in full possession of the entire being = 100%
 - The Holy Spirit is in full possession of the entire being = 100%
- There are **no parts** within God
 - He is one compound unity

The distinction of the three Persons is indicated by an order

- The Father is the first Person of the Trinity
 - This does not mean He came *before* the Son
 - The Father is not *bigger* or *better* than the Son
 - The role is of function, not ontological (ex: citizen)
- The Son is the second Person of the Trinity
- The Spirit is the third Person of the Trinity

There are personal attributes that distinguish the three Persons:

- The Son is **begotten** by the Father (eternally)
- The Father is **unbegotten**
- The Holy Spirit **proceeds** (sent forth) from both the Father and the Son (John 15:26, 16:7)

- Think of these as how the three Persons *relate to each other* and not referring to their essence or nature
- They are eternal relationships not bound by time

The Trinity is a mystery beyond all human understanding

- The Trinity is not contradictory
- The Trinity is not irrational
- It follows what is taught in **Deuteronomy 29:29** – *the secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and our children forever*
- The lack of understanding is on our part, not on God’s part

Questions

- Define the Trinity in one sentence
 - Within the one divine being of God exist three distinct persons which are co-equal, co-essential, and co-eternal.
- What is the difference between the ontological and functional Trinity?
- Is there one God or 3 Gods?
- If the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are each called God, how can God be one?
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- How could Jesus refer to the Father as “God” when He Himself is God?
- What did Jesus mean when He said - “My God my God why have you forsaken me?”
 - Did the Father separate Himself from the Son at that time?
 - No
 - It felt like God abandoned Him due to the intense agony of the transaction of imputation
 - God’s wrath and justice were clearly felt in full force
 - But there was no separation or break between the Father and the Son:
 - **Luke 23:46** - *“Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!”*