

BC Article 8; Luke 3:21-23; II Cor. 13:14; “3 in 1”

I. Father- James 1:17 II. Son- Hebrews 1:3-4 III. Holy Spirit – John 15:26

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, is the Trinity a Biblical concept? Although this word does not appear in the Bible- does Scripture reveal one God who relates to us by way of three distinct persons?

Does believing that there is 1 God and 3 persons really matter that much? What about Jews, Muslims and Jehovah’s Witnesses? They all worship one God, so they must be worshipping the same God that we are right? Well, no! The doctrine of the Trinity is a very historic and accurate doctrine, and all those who belong to the catholic faith must believe in this truth. The only true God is the Trinity. Those who would belong to the true church must embrace this teaching and it must lead to adoration! We must see the Divine provision for meeting our needs. The doctrine of the Trinity is unique to Christianity, and it is how God has revealed Himself. God is so rich that He exists in 3 persons who are one. It has been described this way, there is one “what” and 3 “whos” in this truth. Each person is fully God, yet there are not 3 gods. There is only one divine essence or substance. God is not like a pie chart where each person makes up 33 percent of God, no- each person is fully God. This truth is difficult to grasp, yet it is essential for our faith. As Dt. 6:4 says, hear O Israel the LORD our God, the LORD is one.

Let us take a few moments and consider how this truth has been attacked. All the way back to Arius around 300 AD, there have been those who rejected the full deity of the Son. He taught that the Son has a similar but different substance from the Father. There was a time when the Son was not. This view was refuted by the Counsel of Nicea- 325- which decreed that the Son and the Father are the same substance. Both are God, and there is one God. Others teach that there are different modes or forms that God took on. Just like a farmer can put on a different hat when he works with animals, tills the land, or goes to town. So God takes on different jobs. In the OT, God was the Father. In the NT, God became the Son- and in the church today, God took on the form of the Holy Spirit who now lives in our hearts. This is false teaching that skews the 3 person-ness of God. As our text from Luke 3 clearly showed, at the Baptism of Jesus, the Father was present in the voice from heaven calling Jesus His Son who was pleasing to Him. The Spirit was present in the form of the Dove that landed on Jesus. And the Son was

present in bodily form as Jesus came out of the water. All three persons were present at the same time during one event. You can also look at the Mt. 28 baptismal form for proof. So today, we are considering the Work of the Trinity in the lives of believers under this theme- the **Triune God secures our salvation from beginning to end**. Belief in this truth is not an option, and during this Christmas season we must remember who this God is that we worship.

I. Father- James 1:17

As we continue to look at the work of the Triune God, we will be considering each person of the Trinity and their work in us and for our salvation. We begin by looking at the actions of our Father in heaven. As this article states, the Father is the cause, origin and beginning of all things visible and invisible. This article clearly points out that there are 3 persons of the Trinity, and each person has a unique role and has specific attributes tied to that person. (Read James 1:17-18) The Father is the beginning of all things and from whom all things are. As James 1 says, every good and perfect gift comes from the Father of lights. You can also consider the Lord's Prayer which begins, our Father who art in heaven. We come to the Father and look to His hand to provide for all our needs. From Him everything good comes- it was by His will that we were brought forth. It is the Father that chose us to be His own, taking care of us as a Father takes care of His children. Now when it comes to providing for our needs, we know that the Father takes care of our physical and spiritual needs. As we remember from LD 10, the providence of the Father takes care of our daily needs and without His will, we can neither move nor be moved. Every thing we need is held in His hand. Not only are our physical needs are met, but also our spiritual needs as well. Our Father works faith in our hearts, gives us the means of grace, and chooses His children. It is the Father who elected us from all eternity- by Him we were chosen and He is the one who gave us to the Son for safe keeping. All things in creation and in redemption find their source in Him. The Son came because He was sent by the Father, and the Son also did the will of His Father on earth. However, it must be said that the task of salvation is not exclusive to one person of the Trinity. Each task is not the exclusive property of one person, rather there is agreement and mutual involvement by the others persons. In regards to the creation of the world, it was the Father who spoke all things into being. The very word

that he spoke pointed to the 2nd person, the Son; while at the same time the Spirit was hovering over the water. In a similar way, our salvation finds its source in the Father, while at the same time presupposing the work of the Son and the Spirit.

The Fatherhood of God has a correlation with our fathers on this earth. As earthly fathers are to take care and provide for the needs of their children, so our Heavenly Father provides for our needs. But what earthly fathers do imperfectly, our Father in Heaven carries out perfectly giving us rain in due season, and working all things for our good. All earthly fatherhood is derived from Him. As I Cor. 8:6 says, there is One God and Father from whom and for whom all things exist. If the Father would remove His hand for a moment, we would cease to be. All things are also for Him or for His glory. In our salvation, it is the Father who must declare us innocent by the blood of the Lamb.

II. Son- Hebrews 1:3-4

Next we will consider the Lamb whose blood is needed so that we might be declared righteous. We consider the Son of God and His work in and for our salvation. As our article states, the Son is the Word, wisdom, and image of the Father. When we close our prayers, we close in Jesus' name. Why is that? Because Jesus is our Redeemer who has purchased us with His blood. His blood is atonement for our sins. He was given the name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow. In the blood of the Son, God is our Savior. The Father is the source of every good, but it is the blood of Jesus that secures this goodness. Outside of Christ we only have wrath. It is Jesus who is the Word as John 1 states- and by that Word the world was made. He reveals the will of God for us and for our salvation. It is no accident that the Word incarnate is also the subject of Scripture. By the Son we know that God is our Father. By the Son, we know that we are elect and chosen in Him. We know God's plan for our lives because the Son has told us through His Word. Now you may be waiting for a good illustration, but you will not hear one today. Comparing the Trinity to the stages of water or a triangle creates more problems than it solves. The Trinity is beyond any human understanding and nothing in heaven or on earth can compare. Every illustration that tries to explain the unity and diversity of the Trinity only leads to more

problems, so we must be content with what we have been given and embrace this truth in faith. As the article says, we are content with this knowledge on earth, but in heaven we will understand more fully. (Read Hebrews 1:3-4) Here we see that it is by the Son that God speaks to us today. By the Son the world was created. Jesus is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature. He upholds the universe by the power of His Word. Yet He does not work apart from the Father. As Jesus teaches in John 14, those who have seen the Son have seen the Father. The Son is the incarnate God- He is the visible image of the invisible God. He came to do the will of the Father. As John 15:31 says, I do exactly what the Father has commanded me. It is because of the Son's sacrifice that we are freed from bondage. God the Son must take on our sins for us to be free- His blood was shed for us. Yet even this sacrifice needs to be applied to our lives. The choosing of the Father and obedience of the Son do us no good unless they are applied to us by the Holy Spirit.

III. Holy Spirit – John 15:26

The work of the Holy Spirit is just as necessary as the other persons of the Tri-unity. As our confession reads, the Holy Spirit is the eternal power and might of God. He proceeds from the Father and the Son and dwells in our very heart- making us holy temples. All three persons of the Trinity are eternal, never having a beginning or an end, yet the Son is begotten and the Spirit proceeds. When you hear that the Holy Spirit is the power and might of God, you may be tempted to think of the Spirit as some impersonal force like water, wind or electricity. This however is not the case. The Holy Spirit is a person and not an "it." According to a recent survey, 55 % of claimed Christians deny the personality of the Spirit. This stunning fact goes to prove the need for good doctrine and teaching in the church today. He is the helper sent by the Father to teach and lead us into all truth. The prayer to the Father in the name of the Son is only possible by the Work in us done by the Spirit who puts into words the groaning of our heart.

(Read John 15:26) The Spirit intercedes for us, within us, and teaches us by leading us in the way in truth.

As John stated, He is the Spirit of truth, He bears witness about the Son and brings to remembrance all the Jesus did and taught. Scripture could not have been written without the Spirit working in these men. As the power of God, the Spirit brings to completion all the plans of God. He applies the purposes of the

Father and Works of the Son to us- He brings them home. The Father declares our Justification, the Son purchases our Salvation, and the Spirit applies our Sanctification. All three persons of the Trinity are uncreated, they are not creatures. Our Salvation and perseverance are only complete when the Holy Spirit works in us. The Spirit works through the gospel and opens our heart to the Word. Yet when we talk about the 3 persons, we remember that they are all equal and equally God. There is not a hierarchy in the Trinity. The Father is not more God than the Son or the Spirit. No, all three persons are fully God. Even though the Son and the Spirit submitted to the eternal counsel of the Father, they are not less God or lower on the ladder.

To conclude, each person of the Trinity has their own personalities and roles. But there are not three God, there is only one. $1+1+1=1$. A mathematical impossibility, but it is the truth none the less. They are three and there is only one. In BC article 9, a few more texts are included as sufficient proof that this is how God has revealed himself. From the very first chapters of Genesis to the closing greeting of the epistles, God has spoken to us this way. Even though the word, Trinity, is not in the Bible, the concept is certainly there. But what are we to draw from this doctrine? First, we are to draw comfort because God knows what we need, and has provided the person to fill that need. The work of the Father is that we are provided for. Second, the work of the Son is that we are redeemed in His strength alone. And third, by the Spirit we are being made holy at set apart to God for service. At every moment of our lives, God is our Father, Jesus Christ is our Brother, and the Spirit is in our very soul. We serve a God who is not far off, but one who is close and near- even in our very hearts. We are to rely on Him for all our needs, both for our body and for our soul. Boredom about this doctrine is not an option. If you don't care about the Trinity than you don't care about God. There are severe consequences to this kind of apathy. We may never fully understand, but the truth of this doctrine is still comforting. We must love God as He has revealed Himself to us. Without this truth, then we don't really know God. To know God is to trust and rely on Him. All for His glory and our salvation. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen!