

Tough Questions 'Is the Trinity Biblical?'

Ashford Community Church – Sunday 23rd April



Nicene Creed (325/381 AD)

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, 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.

First Council of Nicaea, First Council of Constantinople (325/381)

Would you say you believe this? Do you agree with it?

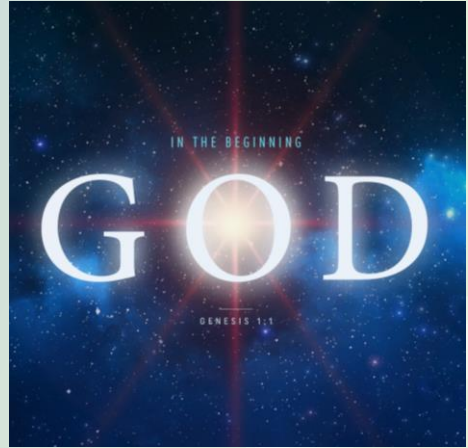
In the Beginning...

'In the beginning God (אֱלֹהִים) created the Heavens and the Earth'

Genesis 1:1 (HCSB)

'Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness... So God created man in His own image'

Genesis 1:26-27 (HCSB)



'In the beginning God' - 'elohim' (plural)

'in Our image' (plural) – then 'in His image' (singular)

('The LORD God said, "Since man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil...'

Genesis 3:22...)

Singular / plurality...



The Angel of the LORD

‘Then the Angel of the LORD said to her [Hagar]:
“You have conceived and will have a son.
You will name him Ishmael,
for the Lord has heard your cry of affliction...”

So she called the LORD who spoke to her: The God
Who Sees, for she said, “In this place, have I
actually seen the One who sees me?””

Genesis 16:11-13 (HCSB)

‘Then the LORD appeared to Abraham at the oaks of
Mamre while he was sitting in the entrance of his
tent during the heat of the day. He looked up, and
he saw three men standing near him. When he saw
them, he ran from the entrance of the tent to meet
them and bowed to the ground.’

Genesis 18:1-2

The Angel of the LORD - mysterious figure

He is not only the Angel (messenger) – but also appears himself to be the LORD

(See also: Exodus 3, Numbers 22, Joshua 5, Judges 6, Judges 13, Daniel 10, Zechariah 3)

David's Lord, the God of God

'This is the declaration of the LORD to my Lord:
"Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies
Your footstool."

The LORD will extend Your mighty sceptre from
Zion. Rule over Your surrounding enemies.'

Psalm 110:1-2 (HCSB)

'Your throne, God, is forever and ever;
the sceptre of Your kingdom is a sceptre of justice.

You love righteousness and hate wickedness;
therefore God, your God, has anointed you with
the oil of joy more than your companions.'

Psalm 45:6-7 (HCSB)



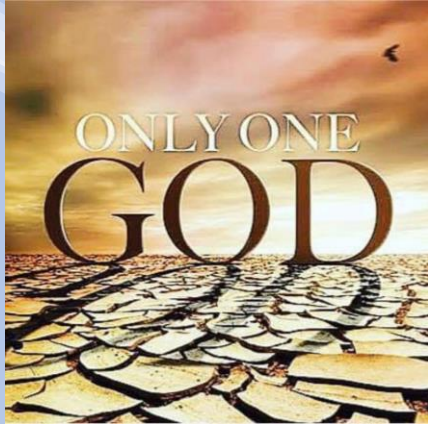
Psalm 110 – (quoted in Luke 20:41-44, Hebrews 1:13)

Who *is* this mysterious ruler that even David calls his 'Lord'?

Psalm 45 – (quoted in Hebrews 1:8-9)

Who is this 'God' the Sons of Korah address – who according to Hebrews 1:8-9, even *God* calls God...?

(See also Isaiah 9:6 - 'a Son is given - Mighty God', Proverbs 30:3-4)



Are there many Gods to worship?

'Lord, there is no one like You among the gods, and there are no works like Yours.

All the nations You have made will come and bow down before You, Lord, and will honour Your name. For You are great and perform wonders; You alone are God.'

Psalm 86:8-10 (HCSB)

'I am the first and I am the last. There is no God but Me.

Who, like Me, can announce the future?... Let these gods declare the coming things, and what will take place. Do not be startled or afraid. Have I not told you and declared it long ago? You are my witnesses!

Is there any God but Me? There is no other Rock; I do not know any.'

Isaiah 44:6-8 (HCSB)

There is **no other God**

One of the clearest things revealed in the Old Testament - (see also the Shema - Deuteronomy 6:4-5, 2 Kings 19:15)

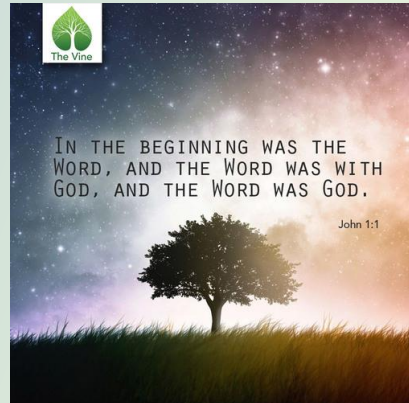
In the Beginning... the Word...

'In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.
He was with God in the beginning.
All things were created through Him,
and apart from Him not one thing was created
that has been created.'

John 1:1-3 (HCSB)

'No one has ever seen God.
The One and Only Son—
the One who is at the Father's side—
He has revealed Him.'

John 1:18 (HCSB)



Now let's go to the New Testament – look at the person of Jesus - perhaps one of the most profound passages - whole Bible...

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'In the beginning' - deliberate reminder of Genesis 1:1 - 'in the beginning God...'
'was the Word' - not 'is the word' but 'was the word' - in the beginning He was
already - ref v2, (Colossians 1:17-18)

'and the Word was with God' - translated 'alongside', 'towards' - with...

'and the Word was God' - mind blowing - as well as being with the person called 'God'
in Genesis 1:1 - He shared that same Person's nature - He was Himself fully divine
(God).

'He was with God in the beginning.' - yet so that we do not think this is simply two
'forms' or 'manifestations' of one single 'person', God - we are reminded again of
what we were told before - He was 'with God' - distinct from the person called God -
at the same time as He 'was God' (v1)

(Struggling to understand? Not unexpected! It is reasonable to expect that we will be
unable to understand everything about God)

Who is this Word? 'The Word became flesh and took up residence among us.' John
1:14

Jesus is the one who reveals God... John 1:18

Who is Jesus?



'My sheep hear My voice, I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish — ever! No one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all. No one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. The Father and I are one.'

John 10:25-30 (HCSB)

"'We aren't stoning You for a good work,'" the Jews answered, "but for blasphemy, because You—being a man—make Yourself God."...

"If He called those whom the word of God came to 'gods'... do you say, 'You are blaspheming' to the One the Father set apart and sent into the world, because I said: I am the Son of God? If I am not doing My Father's works, don't believe Me... This way you will know and understand that the Father is in Me and I in the Father."

John 10:33-38 (HCSB)

(Could look at many examples of this – how Jesus speaks of Himself & is spoken of – e.g. Matthew 1:23, John 5:18, John 8:58)

John 10:25-30

Jesus claims to be unified (one) with God(!) - as the Jews understood correctly - claiming to be God:

John 10:33-38 – Jesus is the Son of God – everything that is true of God, is true of Jesus...

Jesus – Son of God, or God?

“Lord,” said Philip, “show us the Father, and that’s enough for us.”

Jesus said to him, “Have I been among you all this time without your knowing Me, Philip? The one who has seen Me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Don’t you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me? The words I speak to you I do not speak on My own. The Father who lives in Me does His works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me. Otherwise, believe because of the works themselves.

John 14:8-11 (HCSB)



How can Jesus call Himself the Son of God but also Himself be God?

Is Jesus His own Son?

When we say ‘Jesus is *God*’ - we are more often using this term to describe His *nature*, instead of His ‘name’

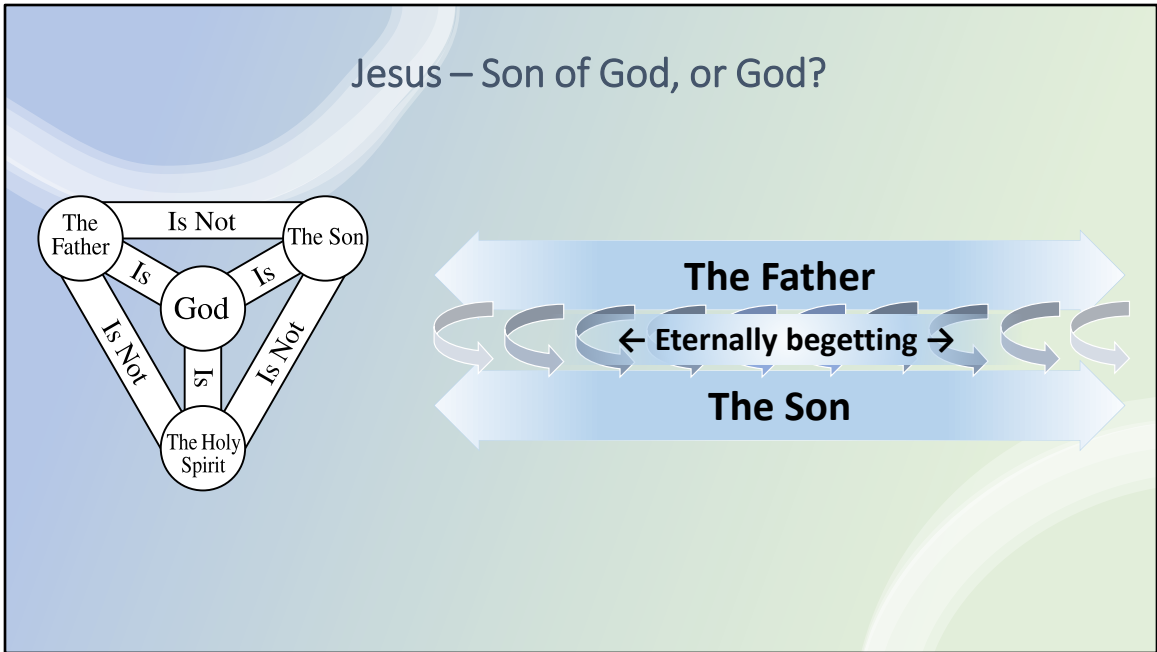
Walking tour of Canterbury - street called ‘Broad Street’ - found ironically the particular part was not that broad - but if you looked back - could see it was in fact, a broad street.

A ‘broad street’ by nature, and it was ‘Broad Street’ by name

We *can* speak personally about Jesus with ‘God’ as a name (Matthew 1:23, Isaiah 9:6) but in the Bible it is much more common for the name ‘God’ to refer to the Father as a person, and for the name ‘Son of God’ to refer to the Lord Jesus Christ as a person. You don’t have to share someone’s name in order to share their nature... (Does this mean that Jesus is any lesser ‘God’ than the Father?)

No - because to see the Son is to see the Father, perfectly, in all His fullness: John 14:8-11 (Colossians 3:9)

Jesus – Son of God, or God?



The Son and the Father are not merely separate 'beings' who are individually called 'Gods' - there is only one nature - one God, in three Persons
(Many attempts to illustrate & explain the Trinity with examples & diagrams – as we may see later - **none** of them are perfect – this is the Shield of the Trinity)

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(Eternally begetting - everything that makes God 'God' is also true of God's Son – He is eternal – He is divine – a bit like me & Joshua, except eternally...)

(Human children – have a beginning, can be many, limited, finite, can be divided – like their fathers)

(The Son of God – eternal (no beginning), can only be one, unlimited, infinite, indivisible – like the Father)

(There was never a time when Jesus was not the Son of God, sharing His nature - there will never be a time when He will not be the Son of God, sharing His nature)

(But different to human daughters & sons – one in nature/substance – one God, in three persons)



The Holy Spirit, the mystery

'For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.'

1 Corinthians 2:11

'Then Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the proceeds from the field? Wasn't it yours while you possessed it? And after it was sold, wasn't it at your disposal? Why is it that you planned this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God!"'

Acts 5:3-4

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, and your ways are not My ways."

This is the Lord's declaration.

"For as heaven is higher than earth, so My ways are higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."

Isaiah 55:8-9 (HCSB)

What about the Holy Spirit? Is He too one with God the Father, and the Son?

Again, everything we can say about God is also said about the Spirit of God:

1 Corinthians 2:11, Acts 5:3-4

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We still may not completely understand - that is understandable - can a dog comprehend all that it is to be human?... can the created comprehend the Creator?

Isaiah 55:8-9, (1 Corinthians 2:9-16)

Why does the Trinity matter?

- Our God truly is **love**
- Our God truly is our **Saviour**
- Our God truly is **within** us



John 17:24-26, Acts 20:28, John 14:17-18

Why does the Trinity matter?

Our God truly is love - God has always existed & always will exist. Before the creation of the world, He was still love. But if He was solely one person, whom was He loving? Self love can never be selfless. True love alone can be directed towards the other. Each Person rejoiced in each others' love, and that love now overflows to us (John 17:24-26)

Our God truly is our Saviour - If God sent another person to be our Saviour, to 'do His dirty work' - how is He in fact our Saviour? But we are called 'the church of God, which He purchased with *His own blood*.' (Acts 20:28)

Our God truly is within us - If the Holy Spirit was just God's power at work in the world, we could say that God is *with* us - but since the ascension of Jesus, we are told that the Spirit of God is not just *with* us - He is *in* us (John 14:17-18). Astonishingly, it is said that through God's promises we can 'share in the divine nature' (2 Peter 1:4) Wow!



'It still just doesn't make sense'

'Eventually the modern theory of quantum mechanics came to picture light as (in some sense) *both* a particle and a wave and (in another sense), as a phenomenon which is *neither* a particle nor a wave... Instead, modern physics sees light as something that can be described sometimes with mathematics appropriate to one type of... metaphor (particles) and sometimes another... metaphor (water waves), but is **actually something that cannot be fully imagined.**'

Wikipedia, 'Light – Quantum theory'

There may still be some who object – it just doesn't make sense – refuse to believe because- the idea that God can be both three and one is against the laws of logic and mathematics

Do you believe in light? Wikipedia's article on the question of what light is (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Light#Historical_theories_about_light,_in_chronological_order)

What is light? What is God? Something that can be described sometimes with mathematics appropriate with 'three', and sometimes 'one' – it is actually something that **cannot be fully imagined** – but we still believe – in fact, we can be certain – that He is real

(O Come All Ye Faithful:
God of God, light of light,
Lo, he abhors not the Virgin's womb;
Very God, begotten, not created
O come, let us adore Him)