

THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

The Doctrine of the Trinity is a core truth of the Christian faith and is central to an understanding of Biblical revelation and the message of the gospel. It teaches that there are three distinct and separate, co-eternal and co-equal members of the Godhead: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. The three are equal but one essence – they co-exist as one. While the word *Trinity* is not found in scripture it is not crucial to sound Christian doctrine that the word defining it is not scriptural. What is crucial is that the doctrine itself stresses its authority in scripture. The Doctrine of the Trinity does this perfectly – the New Testament church was founded on this teaching (CP Ac 2:32-33; 1Pe 1:2).

The Doctrine of the Trinity is not a new revelation found only in the New Testament. It is a progressive revelation which underlies the whole teaching of scripture (CP Gen 1:1). Here in the very first verse in the Bible we find that *God*, from the Hebrew word **Elohim**, is a plural noun, indicating that a plurality of persons exist in the Godhead. Its significance becomes more evident as we read further (CP V 26; 3:22; 11:6-7; Isa 6:8). These scriptures all stress a plurality of persons in the Godhead (CP also Jn 14:23). **Elohim** is used over two thousand seven hundred times in the Old Testament, proving that many times a plurality of persons in the Godhead (CP Mk 1:9-11; Lu 3:21-22; Jn 1:29-34). Here we see clearly the three separate and distinct co-external and co-equal members of the Godhead: God the Father is represented by the voice from Heaven, God the Son is Jesus, and God the Holy Spirit is represented by the dove. Although they are three distinct and separate personalities (CP 1Cor 12:4-6; 2Cor 13-14; Eph 2:17-18; 4:4-6; 2Th 2:13-14), they all function as one (CP 1Jn 5:6-7). *One* in this context means one in unity, not in number (CP Jn 17:5, 21-24).

This oneness, while clearly emphasising the plurality of persons in the Godhead, is plainly expressed in the baptismal formula Jesus gave to the church before being taken up to heaven (CP Mt 28:19). *Name* here is singular, proving the oneness in unity of all three members of the Godhead it includes, even though each one individually is God. The Father is God (CP Jn 6:27; Ro 1:7; 1Cor 8:6; Ga 1:1, 3; Eph 6:23; Php 2:11; 1Th 1:1; 2Ti 1:2; Tit 1:4; Jas 3:9; 1Pe 1:2; 2Pe 1:17; 2Jn 3; Jude 1:1). The Son is God. Jesus is not the Eternal Son of God as so many Christians believe. He became God's Son at His incarnation – when He took on human form (CP Psa 2:7; Isa 7:14; 9:6-7; Mt 1:18-25; Lu 2:8-11; Jn 1:1-2, 14; Ga 4:4; Php 2:5-8; He 1:5-6; 5:5). These scriptures all prove that Jesus came into being as God's Son at a particular time in history and has not been God's Son throughout eternity, as so many believe. In His preincarnate state Jesus always existed as God and scriptures throughout teach this. The name *Immanuel* in Mt 1:18-25 by which Jesus was to be known, according to Isa 7:14, which means "God with us", confirms His Deity. Jn 1:1-2, 14 teaches that in His preincarnate state Jesus was eternally God; that He became the Son at His incarnation "... the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us ..." Php 2:5-8 teaches that Jesus had equal status in the Godhead from all eternity, but when He entered the human race at His incarnation He surrendered all the privileges of Deity – "but made

Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men". Php 2:5-8 does not teach that at His incarnation Jesus renounced His Deity, or that His humanity displaced Deity in His personality. Rather, it teaches that He took upon Himself, in addition to His Divinity, self-abnegation and humility. During His earthly life Jesus did not claim any special privileges. Instead He lived a selfless, obedient life, and then died a selfless, obedient death by crucifixion.

(CP Nu 21:4-9 with 1Cor 10:9). In 1Cor 10:9 we learn that God who sent the fiery serpents among the Israelites, was the preincarnate Jesus. He was God who the Israelites murmured against in the wilderness (CP Psa 45:6-7 with He 1:8-12). We see here two distinct and separate persons, both called God – God the Father, and God the Son. The Father calls the Son God, and declares the Son's eternal sovereignty. In He 1:10 we see that in His preincarnate state the Son carried out the work of creation (CP Gen 1:1-2 with Psa 90:2; 102; 25-27; Jn 1:1-3, 10; Eph 3:9; Col 1:16-17; He 1:1-2; 11:3; Rev 3:14). Rev 3:14 does not mean, as some teach, that Jesus was the first person God created. It means that Jesus began all creation. As Jn 1:3 and 10, and He 1:2 teaches, the preincarnate Jesus created everything there is. Nothing exists that He did not make. Jesus was also *the King, the Lord of Hosts* whose glory Isaiah saw in the Old Testament (CP Isa 6:1-12 with Jn 12:37-41). In Isa 6:1, 8 and 22, Jesus is called *Adonay* which means Ruler, Master, and in V 3, 5 and 12, He is called *Jehovah*, denoting God in the Old Testament. All these names belong to the one person in those passages, and as it was Jesus' glory John said Isaiah saw, then they belong to the preincarnate Jesus, further proving His Deity (CP Isa 52:12; Zech 13:7; Jn 1:1-2; Ac 20:28; Ro 9:5).

While Isa 52 pictures the end times and Christ as the Suffering Servant it also refers to the Israelites' deliverance from captivity in Babylon during Old Testament Times (CP Isa 52:1-15 with Zech 2:6-9). In its Old Testament setting Isa 52:12 refers to the preincarnate Jesus as **Jehovah** – *The Lord* – who will lead the way for the Israelites out of their Babylonian captivity, while the *God of Israel* – also **Jehovah** – will bring up the rear. The eternal pre-existence of Jesus as God is further highlighted in the Old Testament by Micah (CP Mic 5:2). The last defining scripture concerning the eternal pre-existence of Jesus as God in the Old Testament is Zech 13:7 (CP Zech 13:7). Here God – the *Lord of Hosts* – calls the preincarnate Jesus, *My Fellow*, which means "another Fellow of the same kind and nature; Fellow God". Jesus quoted Zech 13:7 in part on the night of His arrest (CP Mt 26:31).

Jesus is also seen in His preincarnate state many times in the Old Testament as the Angel of the Lord. In most of the Old Testament scriptures the Angel of (from) the Lord (Jehovah) is regarded as Deity, yet is distinguished from Jehovah. The Angel of Jehovah is one person in the Godhead, and Jehovah who sent Him, is another. As the Angel of the Lord the preincarnate Jesus spoke to Hagar – Sarah's handmaid – after Sarah at first dismissed her, and then cast her out altogether (CP Gen 16:7-13; 21:9-10, 14-18). He wrestled with Jacob (CP Gen 32:24-30 with Hos 12:2-

5). He spoke to Moses out of the burning bush (CP Ex 3:1-14 with Lu 20:37; Ac 7:30-38). He was the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night that guided the Israelites from Egypt to Canaan (CP Ex 3:1-14 with 14:19-20, 24). He stood in the way of Balaam and caused his ass to speak (CP Nu 32:22-35, 38). He was the Captain of the Host of the Lord who instructed Joshua now to destroy Jericho (CP Josh 5:13 – 6:5). He called Gideon to lead the Israelites against the Midianites who had held them captive for seven years (CP Judg 6:11-24). He was the fourth man Nebuchadnezzar saw walking through the flames in the fiery furnace with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (CP Dan 3:8-28). The preincarnate Jesus was also the rider of the red horse standing among the Myrtle trees who spoke to Zechariah toward the close of the Old Testament (CP Zech 1:7-17).

In all of those scriptures the Angel of the Lord (Jehovah) is regarded as Deity, yet is distinguished from Jehovah, which proves He was an equal member of the Godhead. Other scriptures referring to the preincarnate Jesus as the Angel of the Lord are Gen 22:11-18; 24:7, 40; 31:11; 48:16; Ex 23:20-23; 32:34; 33:2; Nu 20:16; Judg 2:1-4; 13:3-6, 9, 13-21; 1Ki 19:5-7; 2Ki 1:3, 15; 1Chr 21:15-17; Psa 34:7; 35:5-6; Ecc 5:6; Isa 37:36 with 2Ki 19:25 and 2Chr 32:21; Isa 63:7-9; Dan 6:22; Zech 3:1-10; 12:1-8. Bible scholars generally agree that the Angel of the Lord in those scriptures refers to the preincarnate Jesus. In all other places in scripture where the Angel of the Lord is found, the term refers to ordinary angels. The preincarnate Jesus as the Angel of the Lord also visited and spoke to Daniel (CP Dan 10:5-6). Many believe that this was the angel Gabriel, but that is not correct as we shall see (CP Dan 7:9 with Rev 1:12-15). The one referred to in all these scriptures is the same person – the preincarnate Jesus. His clothing was fine linen; His loins were girded with a golden girdle; His hair was like pure wool; His eyes were like lamps of fire; His arms and feet like polished brass, and His voice was like a multitude – the sound of many waters. Gabriel did not speak to Daniel in Ch 10, until V 10 (CP V 10-14).

There are also many scriptures attesting to the eternal pre-existence of Jesus as God in the New Testament too (CP Jn 1:1-2). This is further proof that God and Jesus are two distinct and separate beings who have co-existed as equals from all eternity (CP Jn 3:13). Jesus teaches here that Heaven was always His home. He came down to earth from Heaven at His incarnation and went up again at His ascension (CP Jn 8:56-58). Jesus declares His Deity here; that He existed before Abraham. That Abraham rejoiced to see Jesus' day means that he saw Jesus in the flesh (CP Gen 18:1-8, 16-20; 19:24). The *Lord* here is the preincarnate Jesus. In Gen 19:24 both He and the Lord in Heaven are called Jehovah. Jehovah on earth – Jesus – rained down fire and brimstone upon Sodom and Gomorrah from Jehovah in Heaven (CP Jn 17:5). Here Jesus refers to His preincarnate glory, which He shared with Jehovah as an equal member of the Godhead throughout eternity (CP Ac 20:28). Here is unassailable proof of Jesus' Deity. As God, He purchased the church with His blood (CP Ro 9:5). Here is yet another proof of Jesus' Deity. This teaches that He is God over all forever praised (CP Php 2:5-8).

This is proof positive that the preincarnate Jesus was co-equal in the Godhead throughout eternity but He surrendered all the privileges of Deity when He took on human form at His incarnation – *He made Himself of no reputation* (CP Col 2:8-9). This further confirms the Deity of Jesus – the full content of the Divine nature lives in His bodily form (CP 1Ti 3:16). The previously unknown truth that Jesus is God, is revealed here; He appeared in human form (CP Ga 4:4), was vindicated by the Holy Spirit (CP Ro 1:1-4), was seen by angels (CP Eph 3:9-10), was preached among the Gentiles (CP Eph 3:1-6), was believed on in the world (CP Eph 2:13-18) and was taken up in glory (CP Ac 2:29-36). Paul declared Jesus to be the *great God and our Saviour*, who sacrificed Himself in order to set Christians free from all wickedness, and purify them as a people for Himself (CP Tit 2:13-14). Another scripture clearly defining the Deity of Jesus is 2Pe 1:1 (CP 2Pe 1:1 but not KJV or NKJV). Most other versions render it correctly as "... *our God and Saviour Jesus Christ*" (CP 1Jn 1:1-2). "*That which was from the beginning*" in V 1 refers to the eternal pre-existence of Jesus as God. This is irrefutable evidence by one who heard, who saw, who touched Jesus in His incarnate state (CP 1Jn 3:16). Here John testifies to the Deity of Jesus as God who laid down His life for the church (CP Rev 1:8). *Alpha and Omega* here also means the "first and the last" (CP V 11, 17-18; 2:8; 3:14; 21:6; 22:13). *Alpha* signifies that Jesus is the one who brought all things into existence, and *Omega* signifies that Jesus is also the one who will bring all things to their predetermined end (CP Psa 102:25-27; Isa 51:6; He 1:10-12; 2Pe 3:10-13). The fact that the expression *Alpha and Omega* is applied to Jesus is enough proof of His Deity and equality in the Godhead with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is lesser known as a co-eternal, co-equal member of the Godhead because His works are not as visibly prominent in scripture as that of Jesus and the Father. Therefore, He is the least understood member of the Godhead by Christians. Many professing Christians believe that the Holy Spirit is merely a force, or an influence emanating from God, which, as scriptures clearly teach, is utterly incorrect. The Holy Spirit is, and has always been, a co-equal member of the Godhead throughout eternity. When Jesus told the disciples that He would send *another Comforter* to take His place, when He returned to the Father, He was referring to the Holy Spirit (CP Jn 14:16, 26). *Another* in the context of V 16 means "another of the same kind" – the same kind as Jesus – a person, and also like Jesus, equally God. Both Jesus and Paul refer to the Holy Spirit as *He* in scripture, thus signifying that He is a person (CP Jn 14:16-17, 26; 16:7-15; Ro 8:26-27). In Ro 8:26 KJV, the Holy Spirit is referred to as "the Spirit *itself*". The word *itself* is an incorrect translation of course, and has been corrected to read *Himself* in the NKJV, the same as all other versions of the Bible.

It is vitally important that Christians be very clear in their minds of the Holy Spirit's Deity and His co-equality in the Godhead with both Jesus and the Father (CP Isa 6:8-11 with Ac 28:25-28 and Ac 5:3-4). We learn from Ac 28:25-28 here that God who spoke to Isaiah in Isa 6:8-11 was the Holy Spirit, who Paul also

called God in Ac 5:3-4 (CP also 1Cor 2:10-12; 3:16; 2Cor 3:17-18; He 9:14). In New Testament teaching the work of the Holy Spirit is to glorify Jesus (CP Jn 14:15-18; 16:7-15). Nevertheless the Holy Spirit is still God, as scriptures clearly teach. He also had a role in creation with Jesus and the Father (CP Gen 1:1-2; Psa 90:2; 102:25-27; Jn 1:1-3, 10; Eph 3:9; Col 1:16-17; He 1:1-2, 8-12; 11:3; Rev 3:14; 4:11). The three-in-one Godhead is plainly evident in those scriptures: creation is from the Father, through the Son, by the Holy Spirit. Salvation demonstrates the work of the Trinity: the Father sent the Son to accomplish His redemptive plan, and the Father and the Son sent the Holy Spirit to convict sinners of their need of redemption (CP Jn 14:15-18, 26; 15:26-27; 16:5, 7-11, 13-15). The gifts of the Spirit and administrations of the church also demonstrates the work of the Trinity (CP 1Cor 12:1-6). Many other scriptures also prove the Deity of the Holy Spirit and His co-equality with the Father and Jesus (CP Isa 11:1-5; 42:1-7; 48:16-17; 59: 20-21; 61:1-2; 63:1-14; 1Cor 3:16-17 with 6:11, 19).

Clearly the foregoing scriptures all confirm the Deity of both Jesus and the Holy Spirit and establishes the validity of the Doctrine of the Trinity. Yet those who

reject these teachings have conveniently ignored this body of truth. We will look now at some of the scriptures they use to promote their cause (CP De 6:4; Isa 44:6-8; 45:21-22; Hos 13:4; Mk 12:29; 1Cor 8:6; Eph 4:6; Jas 2:19). The emphasis on all these scriptures is that God is one. Those who use these scriptures to deny the Deity of Jesus and the Holy Spirit and reject the Doctrine of the Trinity, believe that because a singular pronoun – *one* – has been used with the word *God* that it means there is only one member of the Godhead – God the Father. But as scriptures themselves teach, *one* simply means one in unity, not in number because the word *God* is still a plural noun. God is merely contrasting Himself with idols in those Old Testament scriptures and the God of the Old Testament is the same God of the New Testament (CP De 6:14-16; Isa 44:9-11; 46:1-4; Hos 13:1-3). If there is a plurality of persons in the Godhead in the Old Testament, so too there is a plurality of persons in the Godhead in the New Testament, as this study plainly shows. It has to be declared that the Doctrine of the Trinity is irrefutable and those who reject it do so at their peril (CP Jn 5:22-23; 14:6; 1Jn 2:22-23; 5:10-12). See also author's study *Jesus-Eternally God* in **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**.