

LESSON 8



THE HOLY TRINITY

Scripture Texts: Genesis 1:26; Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 3:17; Matthew 28:19; John 1:1 John 16:13-14

When considered philosophically, the doctrine of the Trinity is the most difficult doctrine in the Bible. Nothing just like it is found in any religion other than Christianity. Other religions have their many separate individuals and separate gods. Christianity acknowledges but one God, yet regards this one God as existing in three Persons.

The difficulty encountered in trying to express the doctrine of the Trinity in philosophical terms bears witness to the truth that the idea is not the product of reason. The doctrine grew out of known facts and is of practical value. What we believe concerning this teaching affects our attitude toward Christ and the Holy Spirit. Though we cannot explain or understand adequately the doctrine of the Trinity, it becomes a matter of practical experience with us in our relationship with God.

MEMORY VERSE: *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all.*

2 Corinthians 13:14

The Meaning of Trinity

The term "Trinity" is not found in the Bible but comes to us from the early creeds of the church. It is a term invented to express a doctrine growing out of certain facts clearly taught in the Bible. It means three in one. The term is intended to express the idea that God is one as to substance—not a compound of different substances, but one and indivisible. But this one God is expressed in three personal forms as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In one sense They are Three, and in another sense They are One.

It is quite impossible for us to comprehend how three persons can be separate and yet in such perfect unity as is found in the Trinity. There is no clashing of wills or conflict of desires, but only perfect unity. Personality, as we know it, cannot accurately describe the personality of God. By studying the Trinity we can learn much about the nature of God, but a full knowledge of the nature of God is far beyond our comprehension. A clear comprehension of the doctrine is not necessary to salvation or to fellowship with the Three in One, but a love and obedience to what we do learn is needful for our salvation and fellowship with the Trinity.

The Trinity in the Old Testament

Two methods may be used in tracing the Trinity in the Bible: the one is to trace direct statements that may support the doctrine; the other is to assemble facts that can be explained in no other way. The direct statements are not plentiful but an abundance of facts is found supporting the deity of the separate Persons making up the Trinity. We first consider evidences as found in the Old Testament.

Isaiah 48:16 shows that three persons are under consideration. Other Old Testament texts clearly ascribe deity to the coming Messiah, which would complete the divine Godhead. Indications of the Trinity may be seen in the three holies of Isaiah, Chapter 6, and the benediction of Numbers 6:24-27.

We cannot expect to find the Trinity clearly revealed in the Old Testament during the dispensation of the law

when the light of truth shone but dimly. There were rays of light to those with sufficient spiritual understanding to discern them. Isaiah, Chapters 9 and 11, are good examples.

It was necessary that Israel be well-grounded in the truth of one God, living as they were among idolaters, without the necessity of complicating their thinking with the doctrine of the Trinity, which became of practical value with the coming of Christ to the world.

The Trinity in the New Testament

The truths from which the doctrine of the Trinity is constructed are drawn chiefly from the New Testament. One of the chief evidences—the deity of Christ—will be discussed in a later lesson and will be touched but lightly here. The other line of principal evidence concerns the personality of the Holy Spirit in 1 John, Chapter 5. Direct statements are not abundant, but many Scriptures are in strong support of the Trinity.

The deity of the Father scarcely calls for discussion. He has declared Himself to be the I AM, the Eternal, the Almighty, the only God. The great mass of Christians, Jews, and Mohammedans without hesitation recognize His deity. The only question arises among those who confuse His person with that of Christ. The "Jesus Only" people hold that Jesus Himself was the Father. They tend to believe that Jesus prayed to Himself in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the Cross.

The deity of the Father being admitted, we come to a discussion of the personality of the Holy Spirit. It is quite true that we speak of spirits that are impersonal such as a fearful spirit, a trusting spirit, and such like, meaning attitudes; but when we speak of the Holy Spirit we are not thinking merely of an attitude or influence but of an intelligent Being.

The people who refuse to believe the teaching of the Trinity argue that the Holy Spirit cannot be a person because He is a Spirit. The New Testament speaks of Him as a person and says that He possesses the qualities that make up a person. Jesus made the explanation that it is better and necessary that He return to Heaven so that the Holy Spirit may come, a Comforter whom the Father would send (John 16:7). The three Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—are here associated. The Holy Spirit is identified with the Comforter, or Counselor, in some such manner as Christ is identified with the Savior.

Further evidence of the personality of the Holy Spirit is seen in the fact that He possesses and exercises personal powers. It is said of Him that He abides, He dwells, He reminds us, He teaches us, He hears, He speaks, He testifies, He reproves, He is grieved, He glorifies, and He may be resisted. The Spirit makes choice of ministers and directs them where to go. The Spirit sets members in the body of Christ. The Spirit imparts gifts to members as He wills.

Having admitted the personality of the Spirit, His deity cannot be denied. If there is any question at this point, one might observe Peter's words to Ananias. It is clear that in lying to the Holy Spirit, he lied to God. In this the deity of the Spirit is shown. We may not understand it or be able to explain it, but we may know it through a personal revelation by that Spirit.



JUST A THOUGHT

"Wise men always know more than they tell, but fools tell more than they know."