

Questions Answered About The Trinity

Author: Larry W. Wilson

Monotheism Versus Tritheism

Many Christians have different perspectives about the Trinity and the role of the Holy Spirit, so I decided to dedicate this *Wake Up Report!* to my understanding of this topic. Questions regarding the Trinity have long roots in Christian history and Christian views are widely divided on the nature and properties of the Godhead. As I discuss this topic, please understand that my conclusions may be different than your own. My goal is for you to take this information and use it as a stepping stone for your own personal study.

Monotheism versus Polytheism

To be as clear and direct as possible, I believe the Bible teaches that Jesus Christ is a separate, distinct, co-eternal member of the Deity. Jesus is not the Father and the Father is not Jesus. Both Deities are separate persons having separate wills. They are also equals in substance.

By definition, this understanding makes me a polytheist, an individual who believes there is more than one deity. I also believe the Holy Spirit is a separate, distinct, co-eternal member of Deity. The Holy Spirit is not the Father or Jesus. The Holy Spirit is a Deity who can hear and speak on His own.

He has a will of His own. He is equal with the Father and Jesus. As you can see, I believe the Bible teaches there are three distinct, separate, co-eternal beings that make up the Godhead and this makes me a tritheist. (A tritheist believes there are three separate deities.) I believe the Bible teaches these three Gods are so closely united in purpose, plan, and action that they often function and/or speak singularly as one God. Their role, separateness, and perfect union make the Godhead a fascinating, yet controversial, study.

To me, three separate Gods functioning as one deity is similar to a husband and wife (two separate individuals) functioning as one flesh. (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4-6) Many Christians believe in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit without serious consideration.

Hopefully, this presentation will help you think through this topic and decide what you believe based on Scripture. In an effort to be as fair as possible, I should mention that many Christians disagree with tritheism. They believe the Bible upholds the doctrine of monotheism, that is, there is one God who manifests Himself as three persons.

In doing so, they deny that Jesus and the Holy Spirit are separate and distinct members of deity. Therefore, they reason that if a person worships Jesus or the Holy Spirit, he or she is actually worshipping the Father because the Father is in Jesus and the Father is in the Holy Spirit and all together, they are the Father. This discussion dates back to the beginning of the

Christian Church: Are there three separate co-eternal Gods or is there one God manifesting Himself as three persons?

The Nature of Jesus in Church History

During Christ's ministry on Earth, the Pharisees found His teachings to be blasphemous because Jesus claimed to be the Son of God and they viewed His claim as being equal with God to be blasphemy. The Pharisees were incensed because Judaism is strictly a "one God" religion which rejects the possibility of three separate co-eternal Gods. Judaism also rejects the possibility of a Godhead in which one God manifests Himself as three persons. Therefore, when Jesus appeared in A.D. 27, He seriously challenged Israel's monotheistic tradition.

The first converts to Christ's teachings were Jews (His disciples). During His ministry, the number of Jewish believers grew, but the number of His followers remained small. Then, a few days after Christ's ascension, 3,000 Jews were baptized at Pentecost. (Acts 2) As the number of Jewish converts swelled, they became divided over the nature of Jesus.

Some Jewish converts believed that Jesus was a separate God, separate and distinct from the Father. Others believed that God created Him and still others believed that Jesus was an incarnation of the Father. Later, after Paul converted to Christianity, Gentiles joined the Christian Church in increasing numbers and seeds of a stubborn controversy began to sprout.

Gentiles generally came from polytheistic backgrounds and arguments between monotheistically biased Jews and polytheistically biased Gentiles began over the nature of Jesus. The core of their argument was whether Christians should be monotheistic or polytheistic.

Conflict over the nature of Jesus roiled the body of Christ for several centuries and many ideas and divisions followed. During the fifth and sixth centuries A.D., the church at Rome gained religious and political powers. Once the Catholic Church held sufficient standing within the Holy Roman Empire, the church moved to "forever settle and end" the argument over the nature of Jesus and the Godhead.

The Eleventh Synod of Toledo (in Spain) in A.D. 675 formally declared the Church's position on the trinity. In brief, church leaders said: "We confess and we believe that the holy and indescribable Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is one only God in His nature, a single substance, a single nature, a single majesty and power. . . . The three are one, as a nature, that is, not as person. Nevertheless, these three persons are not to be considered separable, since we believe that no one of them existed or at any time effected anything before the other, after the other, or without the other." (Source: Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J., Catholic Doctrine on the Holy Trinity, http://www.therealpresence.org/archives/Trinity/Trinity_001.htm, emphases mine)

With this declaration, the Roman Catholic Church modified the strict monotheism of the Jews. Later, Abbot Joachim (1135-1202), who was an influential monk, promoted the idea that the Trinity was made up of three separate, distinct Gods. Because Joachim was widely respected,

his views gained some traction. After he died, the church silenced Joachim's teaching during the Fourth Lateran Council (1251). The council affirmed that there is one God, manifested in the Bible as three persons. Nearly 200 years later at the Council of Florence (1445), the church reaffirmed monotheism: The Trinity is One God who manifests Himself as three persons. Like the Jews, the Church maintained there was one God, but that He manifested Himself as three persons. This position remains unchanged and many Protestant churches embrace this understanding today.

Textual Conflict

Sometimes, the Bible presents a topic that seems to have opposing properties. For example, the Bible indicates in one place that Hell will burn forever and in another place, that Hell will not burn forever. When the Bible presents an *apparent conflict*, a controversy can occur because people will typically sample *some* of the evidence and reach a premature conclusion. Human nature loves to magnify what it wants to believe and diminish the importance of what it does not understand or wants to believe.

The doctrine of the Godhead has been controversial for centuries because the Bible *appears* to present conflicting ideas on this topic. However, for the honest in heart, an *apparent conflict* in the Bible is an invitation for careful and thorough study because mature Christians know there is no internal conflict within God's Word.

The Godhead is true and changeless and the Word of God accurately reflects their character. Therefore, an *apparent conflict* in the Bible means there is a lofty solution that, when found, will harmoniously encompass all the apparent conflicts. *The Bible has to make sense just as it reads or it cannot speak for itself.* With this premise in mind, please consider these seven issues:

1. If the Catholic position on the Trinity, "one God manifesting Himself as three persons," is valid, how can one God have two wills? Did Jesus petition another manifestation of Himself in the Garden? **"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."** (Luke 22:42, emphases mine)
2. Did the Father send a manifestation of Himself to Earth or did He send another Deity who had a will of His own, a Deity who was separate and distinct from Himself? Jesus told the Jews, **"For I have come down from Heaven not to do My will but to do the will of Him who sent Me."** (John 6:38, emphases mine)
3. Did the Father speak about His love for Himself when Jesus was baptized or did the Father speak about His love for another member of Deity? **"Then a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud: 'This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!'"** (Mark 9:7, emphasis mine)
4. During His final moments on the cross, did Jesus cry out to another manifestation of Himself with a question? **"And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lama**

sabachthani?’ – which means, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’ " (Mark 15:34, emphasis mine)

5. Paul said that God the Father raised Jesus from the dead. Did the Father raise up a manifestation of Himself or did the Father restore life to a member of Deity who willingly gave up His eternal life so that sinners could have it? **"Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him [Jesus] from the dead;)"** (Galatians 1:1-KJV, insertion mine, emphasis mine)

6. Jesus said that He was once dead and is now alive forever more. (Revelation 1:18) If Jesus is a separate member of Deity who willingly gave up His eternal life so that sinners could have it, the price of our redemption exceeds calculation. On the other hand, if Jesus is a mere manifestation of the Father, God's sacrifice for our sins amounts to just suffering. Said another way, if the penalty for sin is death, God did not pay the penalty for our sins because God Himself did not die on the cross.

7. Finally, I have to ask this question. If there is one God who manifests Himself as three persons, why did the Father search through the whole universe only to determine that another manifestation of Himself (Jesus) was worthy to receive the book sealed with seven seals? (See Revelation 5.)

This prophetic story highlights the core issue between the doctrine of monotheism (one God) and tritheism (three Gods). What would be the point of the Father searching throughout the universe for someone worthy to take the book sealed with seven seals only to give it to Himself? If monotheism is true and there is only one God, then Revelation 5 becomes a divine sham and we know this is not possible! ". . . **Let God be true and every man a liar. . . .**" (Romans 3:4) God is honest and always above any hint of reproach.

When considering the previous seven issues, the idea of one God manifesting Himself as three persons creates several textual problems for which there is no solution. *The greatest problem I have with Jewish monotheism and the Catholic's modification of that monotheism is that the Bible is put into a position where it cannot be understood just as it reads.*

If a Bible student is willing to consider the idea that the Godhead (the Trinity) is made up of three separate Gods who are united as one Deity, serving creation as one God in purpose, plan, and action, the entire Bible will make perfect sense *just as it reads*. When people reach or support conclusions built on religious bias, insufficient samples, inadequate knowledge, or maligned opinions, they create many insurmountable problems and questions resulting in confusion and more division.

A Good Question

At this point, you may be asking yourself, "If the Godhead functions as one in purpose, plan and action, what difference does it ultimately make if there is one God or three separate Gods? Let me emphasize why I believe this topic is important by listing four reasons.

1. When people know the truth about the Godhead, the Bible will make sense *just as it reads*. This is extremely important. *Every truth is a stepping stone for understanding greater truth*. For example, Paul said the Father is "**King of kings and Lord of lords.**" (1 Timothy 6:15)

However, when Jesus appears at the Second Coming, John sees Him wearing the title, "**King of kings and Lord of lords.**" (Revelation 19:16) Can the Father and the Son be the same person or is there much more to the story? I believe Jesus was found worthy in 1798 to receive sovereign power. (For further study on this topic, please see Prophecies 3 and 6 in my book, *Jesus' Final Victory*.)

In essence, the Father gave His throne and power to Jesus and this is how Jesus became "King of kings and Lord of lords." Paul tells us that once Jesus has accomplished everything that needs to be done, Jesus will return the sovereign power and throne to the Father. (1 Corinthians 15:25-28) At the end of sin's drama, the Father will reveal to everyone that Jesus is the Father's equal in every way!

2. The behavior of three separate but equal deities is defining. Three separate co-eternal Gods living in perfect harmony define what love is and is not to all observers. They live and function according to the laws of love, thus their lives are a comprehensive demonstration, a living laboratory for all creation to study.

3. If we understand that Jesus is deity, a separate, distinct co-eternal member of the Godhead, then the enormous price which our salvation required is shocking. Think about this: A co-eternal member of the Godhead was willing to cease to exist forever so that we might have His eternal life.

Because Jesus was willing to forfeit His life for sinners and was willing to fulfill the Father's will perfectly for our salvation, the Father, by His own authority, raised Jesus from the dead so that He could later exalt Jesus as His equal! (Why is this important to know? The character of Jesus mirrors the character of the Father. Thus, Jesus said, ". . . **Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.** . . ." John 14:9)

4. The presence of three independent members of deity and an expanding universe of created beings requires government. Three Gods and billions of free moral agents having the power of choice could not live together harmoniously without a government based on laws of love. This is why monotheism is a deficient doctrine: If there is one God as Judaism claims or one God having three manifestations as Catholicism claims, then what is love?

If Lucifer and his followers had to wait for "a manifestation of God" to die on the cross in A.D. 30 to see what love is, then their complaints against God before the Earth was created could be justified. If there is only one God, there is no example of love to emulate and no definition of love other than what God says.

On the other hand, if there are three distinct, separate, co-eternal members of the Godhead, their daily submission to each other is a divine example which created beings can study and emulate throughout eternity. *God never asks His children to do or experience something that He*

has not first experienced.

The Deity of Jesus

Now that we have briefly examined some church history and mildly challenged two forms of monotheism, we need to dig a little deeper into the Bible to see if Jesus is, in fact, a co-eternal, separate and distinct Deity independent of the Father. In short, we need to learn if the Bible teaches polytheism. Please examine the following passages and consider my response to each one.

1. Psalm 45:7 "[The Father said to the Son,] **You love righteousness and hate wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy.**" (insertion and emphases mine) This text indicates polytheism since one deity spoke to another deity. (Paul repeats this text in his letter to Jewish believers that affirms that Jesus is a God who was set above His companions. At a point in time, God the Father revealed to the angels that Jesus had a status above the angels. See Hebrews 1:9.)

Comment: This verse, twice repeated in Scripture, confuses many Christians because they either reject or do not know that Jesus once lived among the angels as one of them. Before coming to Earth, Michael was the archangel. For the purpose of discussion, consider this: Before Jesus lived on Earth in the form of a man, Jesus lived in Heaven in the form of an angel.

Just as many people did not know that Jesus was God when He was on Earth, many angels did not, at first, know that Michael was God. When sin occurred on Earth, Michael offered to give up His eternal life for sinners and the Father responded with the words written in Psalm 45:7.

The Father openly declared Michael to be "God" before the angels and this is how Michael was exalted above His companions. This is one of the wonderful things about the Godhead. They do not lord their awesome powers over their subjects. Love does not permit it! (Presentations about Michael/Jesus as God are in Chapters 1-3 of my book, *Jesus: The Alpha and The Omega* and Prophecy 12 of my book, *Jesus' Final Victory*.)

2. Philippians 2:6, Colossians 2:9 "[Jesus] **Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped . . . For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.**" (insertion and emphases mine.)

Comment: Because Jewish converts to Christianity often stumbled and struggled with the deity of Jesus, Paul was forced to confront the monotheism of Judaism regularly. Wishing to clear the air on this topic, Paul wrote to the churches in Philippi and Colossae saying, (a) Jesus was "in very nature God," and (b) in Christ's body, all the fullness of deity lives." Paul is adamant that Jesus is Deity like the Father. Jesus also said that He should be honored (worshiped) even as the Father is honored. (John 5:22,23) If the Father and the Son were not equals, Jesus' words would have been blasphemous and this is precisely how the Jews interpreted His words.

3. John 5:18 "**For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill Him; not only was He**

breaking the Sabbath, but He was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God." (emphasis mine)

Comment: The Jews were fiercely loyal to "one God" and because of this, they "tried all the harder to kill Jesus" when He called God His Father. To better appreciate their hatred for Jesus, please consider this backdrop:

The devil is a master at creating lies and counterfeits. For example, the Bible says that Jesus created the world in six days, but the devil has led a huge number of educated and intelligent people to believe that the world and everything in it evolved over billions of years. Jesus made the seventh day holy at the end of Creation Week and the devil has created competing holy days (Friday for Moslems and Sunday for Christians) to largely obscure this fact.

The Bible teaches that salvation comes through faith in Christ, but the devil has led billions of people into thinking they can obtain salvation through sacraments, merits, or good works. For every good thing that God has said or created, the devil has created a lie or a counterfeit. This is particularly true regarding the Godhead.

After Noah's flood, at the time of the Tower of Babel, God divided the world. The devil seized upon this development by leading mankind into the darkness of superstition and counterfeit polytheism. Attempting to obscure the truth about the Godhead, the devil led the ancients to believe there were many gods. (Greek mythology is a good example of counterfeit polytheism.)

Lucifer's counterfeit polytheism was already at work by the time of Abraham. The Egyptians worshiped many gods. After Abraham's descendants were held as hostages and used as slaves for 400 years in Egypt, many of them also worshiped the gods of the Egyptians.

The biblical account documents this practice: **"When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said, 'Come, make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him.'**" (Exodus 32:1, emphasis mine) I am sure that you remember that Aaron made a golden calf which probably represented Apis, a powerful "bull god" which the Egyptians worshiped.

When Jesus spoke to the Israelites at Mt. Sinai, He spoke to them in the singular because Jesus spoke on behalf of a united Deity. Therefore, the first commandment says, **"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me."** (Exodus 20:2,3, emphasis mine)

Given their polytheistic experience in Egypt, the Jews understood the first commandment to mean the gods of the Egyptians were nothing because there was only one God, the God who had delivered them from Egypt. However, their simplistic understanding of the Godhead eventually set them up for a fatal mistake.

Their narrow understanding of the first commandment gave them the reason and authority to reject Jesus as another God 1,500 years later. Ironically, the Jews never discovered that the

God who they called Jehovah for 1,500 years was Jesus Christ Himself. When Jesus claimed that God was His Father, they understood Jesus to claim equality with the Father which made them so angry they tried "all the harder to kill Him."

This brings us to an important point. If a person wishes to properly understand the doctrine of the Godhead, he has to search the Bible with timeliness in mind. In other words, a Bible student has to be aware of a divine process called "progressive revelation." Progressive revelation means that over time, more about the Bible subject is revealed.

The book of Genesis introduces the Godhead in the first verse by using the Hebrew word *elohiym* (*elohiym* indicates plural Gods) and 65 books later, the book of Revelation brings this topic to a profound climax. The book of Revelation is called "The Revelation of Jesus Christ" because at the end of sin's drama, Jesus will be revealed to the universe as a distinct, separate, co-eternal God equal to the Father.

Of course, Jews and Christians through the ages could not understand the Godhead because the book of Daniel was sealed up until the time of the end. (Daniel 12:9) Now that Daniel has been unsealed and the rules of interpretation have been discovered, Revelation's story unfolds to reveal the truth about the Godhead. For the first time in Earth's history, all 66 books in the Bible can be understood. They are in perfect harmony – *just as they read*.

Before we move forward to Item 4, please consider three examples of progressive revelation: The Lord said to Moses, "**I [Jesus] appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty, but by my name the Lord [Jehovah] I did not make myself known to them.**" (Exodus 6:3, insertions and emphasis mine)

Paul wrote: "**Now to Him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey Him. . .**" (Romans 16:25,26, emphasis mine)

Peter wrote: "**He [Jesus] was chosen [by the Father] before the creation of the world, but was revealed [to us] in these last times for your sake.**" (1 Peter 1:20, insertions and emphasis mine)

You may wonder what progressive revelation has to do with monotheism and the first commandment. When Jesus spoke from Mt. Sinai, He spoke in the singular because the Godhead is singular in purpose, plan, and action. The oneness of the Godhead is declared in the first commandment.

When Jesus said "**I am the Lord your God you shall have no other Gods before me,**" we know that Jesus spoke for the Godhead because He used the plural for God (*elohiym*) when He said, "**I am the Lord your God.**" Speaking in the singular, Jesus counteracted the gross polytheism which permeated the world at the time.

Remember, Jesus speaking in the singular is not a problem for the Father. The worship of the Son is permitted because the Son is also a member of the deity. (John 5:22,23) Even more, no one learns the truth about Father without first learning the truth about Jesus. (John 14:6) This brings us to the next text.

4. John 1:1,3 **"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. . . . The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. . . Through Him [the Word] all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made."** (insertions and emphasis mine)

Comment: If we allow the Bible to speak for itself, this text is radiantly clear. John declares that Jesus is the Creator of everything, Jesus is a separate God, independent from the Father. John says Jesus was with God and Jesus was God, before anything was made. This indicates polytheism and that more than one deity was present in the beginning. Jesus is given the title, "the Word," in John 1 because Jesus is the voice of the Godhead. When the Godhead has something to say, Jesus speaks it.

5. Genesis 1:1 **"In the beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth."** (emphasis mine)

Comment: Does the first verse in the Bible indicate monotheism or polytheism? The word used for God in Genesis 1:1 is the Hebrew word *elohiym* which is the plural form of *elowahh* which means the Deity. Three Deities (plural) were present at the creation of Earth.

The Father commissioned Jesus as the creative agent of the Godhead to create Earth. (Hebrews 1:2; John 1:3,10) and at the same time, the Holy Spirit was hovering over the waters. Wherever the Father and/or Jesus go, the Holy Spirit is already there because the Holy Spirit is everywhere; He is omnipresent. (Genesis 1:2; 2; Acts 5:31,32; Timothy 1:14)

6. Genesis 1:26 **"Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air . . .'"** (emphases mine)

Comment: The plurality of God cannot be overlooked or ignored in the first chapters of Genesis. At Creation, Jesus said to the Father and the Holy Spirit, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness" This passage and Genesis 1:1 indicates polytheism existed before the creation of Earth and John 1:1 affirms this point.

All of God's children are created in His image, after His likeness. Every child of God has a separate, distinct will because each member of the Godhead has a separate, distinct will. Every child of God can know and understand the principles of love because each member of the Godhead is a God of love. When Jesus created Adam and Eve, He gave them characteristics that mirror the characteristics of the Godhead. Because the Godhead lives together as one Deity, a husband and wife can live together as one flesh.

7. Deuteronomy 6:4 **"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one."** (emphases mine)

Comment: The English translation of this verse appears to support monotheism (one God). However, when we look into the Hebrew language, Moses used the word *elohiym* for God to indicate that God is plural. A literal translation of this verse means: Hear, O Israel: Our God is plural and Jehovah (Jesus) is the One [who represents them]. Incidentally, about 98% of the references to Jehovah in the Bible refer to the God we call Jesus!

8. Isaiah 45:5 **"I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me . . ."**
(emphasis mine)

Comment: At first glance, the English translation of this verse supports monotheism. However, if we look again into the Hebrew language, Jesus Himself used the plural form of deity (*elohiym*) in this declaration. A literal translation of this verse means: "I am Jehovah (Jesus). I speak for the Godhead. What I say is from Us." This truth is affirmed in John 1 where Jesus is called "the Word." Jesus is called "the Word" or "the Word of God" (Revelation 19:13) because He alone speaks for the Godhead.

Jesus Is an Almighty God!

Before we leave this discussion on monotheism versus polytheism, I need to address some issues that have been postponed in previous paragraphs.

Look at this text: **"This is what the Lord says – Israel's King and Redeemer, the Lord Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God (*elohiym*)."** (Isaiah 44:6, emphasis mine) Did Jesus or the Father make this declaration? Please open your Bible and compare Isaiah 44:6 with Revelation 2:8, and then compare Revelation 22:13 with Revelation 1:8.

Exchange the different terms describing Jesus within these four verses and you will discover four facts: (a) Jesus declares that He is the first and the last, (b) Jesus declares that He is the Lord Almighty, (c) Jesus declares that He is Israel's King and Redeemer (Pilate's sign on the cross was correct – compare Luke 23:3 with John 19:19-22), and finally (d) Jesus declares that He is the Alpha and the Omega. Please review these supporting verses until they make sense, just as they read. Jesus has revealed many characteristics about Himself in these verses that separates Him from the Father.

When Jesus said that He is the First and the Last, the Alpha and the Omega, He was not saying that chronologically speaking, He was the first God to exist. Rather, Jesus was saying that from the cosmic beginning (before anything existed), He has been the voice of the Godhead.

He does not speak on His own behalf. Therefore, as the Word of God, His words are first and they are final (the beginning and the end). When Jesus said that He is the Lord Almighty, He declared that He is an Almighty God, Israel's interface with an Almighty Godhead. Worshiping Jesus is the same as worshiping the Father because they are one and they are equals! (John 5:22,23; Colossians 2:9)

Three in One?

The Bible does not explicitly answer how the Godhead came about. However, it does contain insight on this topic and when the evidence is carefully put together, a wonderful story unfolds. The following scenario is supported by a variety of texts although some details are my own creation. For purposes of discussion, please consider the following:

The Bible indicates there was a time before anything was created that can be called "the beginning." (John 1:1) Let us assume that three separate, distinct, co-eternal Gods came together for a meeting. According to infinite wisdom and loving kindness, they agreed to unite and unify to create a family that would fill an ever expanding universe.

As equal, co-eternal Gods, having the same powers and prerogatives, the other option was endless competition and warfare. There is not enough space in the universe for three equal, independent, free will infinite Gods to live if they have no interest in unity and cooperation! Therefore, if they could not unite as one Godhead, they knew that all creation would get caught up in a conflict of loyalties between opposing deities. So, their first act as the Godhead was a solemn declaration of submission to each other (comparable to a marriage).

This submission involved separate components and with each submission, each God accepted a specific power and a specific limitation. In other words, to live together as one, each God had to relinquish certain powers and prerogatives to the other two so that all three could function as one Deity – ONE in purpose, plan and action.

For example, two Gods (the Father and Holy Spirit) agreed that the other God (the God the angels call Michael and we call Jesus) should serve as the voice of the Godhead. They did this so that everything and anything the Godhead might say to their creation would come from one mouth.

This submission on the part of two Gods explains why Jesus is called "The Word" in John 1 and "The Word of God" in Revelation 19:13. In today's vernacular, we would say that Jesus was appointed, "The Speaker of the House." Speaking for the Godhead was not the only submission that occurred.

The Father and the Holy Spirit also relinquished their creative powers to Jesus and He was appointed as "The Creative Agent of the Godhead." Jesus is the only God who creates and He alone created everything that exists in Heaven, on Earth, and throughout the universe. (Colossians 1:16,17)

Because the Father and Holy Spirit have no voice (that is, neither can speak for the Godhead) and because the Father and Holy Spirit cannot create anything having substance, these two submissions are profoundly important to understand. Look again at John 1 and Colossians 1:16,17:

"In the beginning[before anything existed] **was the Word** [Jesus is called "the Word" because

He speaks for the Godhead], **and the Word was with God** [Jesus was with the Father and the Holy Spirit], **and the Word was God** [Jesus is a distinct and separate deity just like the Father and the Holy Spirit are separate and distinct deities]. . . . **Through him** [the Word] **all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.**" (John 1:1,3 insertions and emphases mine)

"For by Him[Jesus] **all things were created: things in Heaven** [He created the angels] **and on Earth** [He created mankind], **visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by Him and for Him. He** [Jesus] **is before all things, and in Him all things** [the whole universe] **hold together.**" (Colossians 1:16,17, insertions and emphases mine)

This mutual submission of the Father and the Holy Spirit to Jesus encompasses some issues we need to consider. In another example, two Gods (Jesus and the Holy Spirit) relinquished their rights of sovereign authority to the Father so the Father rules over Jesus and the Holy Spirit unopposed.

As King of kings and Lord of lords (until 1798), the Father was free to exercise His authority according to His infinite wisdom. Jesus and the Holy Spirit are not only supportive, they are 100% committed to whatever the will of the Father might be! This awesome faith cannot be described in words!

The encompassing issue of mutual submission between members of the Deity is important to understand because it explains elements which would otherwise be impossible to understand. Another example of submission is when two of the Gods surrendered their ability to be omnipresent to the Holy Spirit.

Prior to their union three separate Gods had the ability to be everywhere at once. However, the Father and Jesus relinquished this ability to the Holy Spirit so that the Godhead would have one set of universal eyes and ears. Because they must have complete faith in each other, God's subjects are required to have faith in them. What a wonderful concept.

Since the Holy Spirit is the only God who can be everywhere at the same time, He serves as a two-way conduit between the Godhead and all creation. The Holy Spirit sees and hears everything as it happens in real time throughout the whole universe and He conveys this information to the Father and Jesus as it happens.

On the other side the coin, the Holy Spirit can immediately connect one or all of God's saints with the Godhead without the necessity of an appointment! According to Apostle Paul, the Holy Spirit intercedes for God's saints. He also reports to the Father the contents and desire of every contrite sinner. (Romans 8:26,27)

Think this through: Because of their perfect union and submission to each other, we actually serve three Gods. We have a God above us (the Father who served as the supreme Ruler of the Universe (until 1798) whose government is righteous and true).

We also have a God beside us (Jesus, the Creative Agent of the Godhead, who lives among His creation as one of us, showing us what the Deity would do if the Father lived within our limitations). Finally, we have a God within us (the Holy Spirit is present within every heart, nurturing us, guiding us, comforting us, edifying us, and bringing God's joy and presence to us).

Is the Holy Spirit a Separate God?

If you have managed to read this far, you know why I believe the Bible teaches polytheism (more than one Deity lives in Heaven). I believe the Father and Jesus are distinct, separate, co-eternal members of Deity. If the Father and Jesus separately exist, I believe it is safe to assume that the Holy Spirit exists separately. The Holy Spirit is not the Father or "an influence that emanates" from the Father (as Catholics believe), and the Holy Spirit is not Jesus. There are three factors that lead me to this conclusion:

The first factor is the universal presence of an unpardonable sin. Have you ever wondered why the unpardonable sin is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit and not blasphemy against the Father or Jesus? Jesus said that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is unpardonable in this age and in the age to come (after we get to Heaven and sin is no more)! (Matthew 12:31,32) How does blasphemy against the Holy Spirit occur and why is sinning against the Holy Spirit the one sin which Deity cannot forgive?

Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit occurs when a person repeatedly defies a conviction from the Holy Spirit. Suppose the Father directs the Holy Spirit to convict a certain person about something which He wants that person to do. The Holy Spirit comes to that person and strongly impresses the person that he must do something which the Father wants him to do. (For example, do you remember the note that Pilate's wife sent to her husband when Jesus was in his court?) (See Matthew 27:19. See also King Agrippa's comment in Acts 26:28.) Suppose the person rejects the conviction from the Holy Spirit, not once, not just five times, but like Pharaoh, rejects the conviction many times and becomes more and more stubborn. Eventually, rebellion will mute the conviction and the internal struggle will end. Any desire to do what the Father wanted will simply evaporate.

The Holy Spirit is a God of love. He loves and respects the will of each sinner for whom Jesus died and He will only leave a person if that person insists on *continued* rebellion. When the Holy Spirit detects that defiance has taken a person beyond the point of repentance, his sin becomes unpardonable.

After every effort had been made to bring Lucifer and his followers to repentance, God cast them out of Heaven because they blasphemed the Holy Spirit. What makes defiance against the Holy Spirit unpardonable? *The only God who can enter our hearts and convey the will of the Father with conviction is the God who is omnipresent.* Jesus cannot do this. The Father cannot do this. Neither of them have omnipresence. If we shut out the Holy Spirit, we shut off all communion with God and this is unforgivable. (1 Corinthians 2:14; Romans 8:6-9)

The second factor that indicates the Holy Spirit is a separate member of the Godhead is that

when a sinner is baptized into Christ, he becomes a participant in God's redemption. Therefore, Jesus commanded that such a person be baptized into three distinct, separate, co-eternal members of the Godhead, uniquely named and identified as The Father, The Son, and The Holy Spirit. (Matthew 28:10-20) I believe that Jesus commanded this because redemption requires the efforts of all three Gods.

The final factor is that Jesus indicates the Holy Spirit is a separate, distinct God who has relinquished His authority to speak on His own! Carefully study the words of Jesus: **"But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth. [Even though He can,] He will not speak on his own; He will speak only what He hears [from the Father and Me], and He will tell you what is yet to come."** (John 16:13, insertions and emphases mine) Why did Jesus say the Holy Spirit will not speak on His own?

Why did Jesus say the Holy Spirit would speak only what He hears? Why did Jesus say the Holy Spirit will tell you what is yet to come? Jesus used this language to indicate that like Himself, the Holy Spirit is the God who hears and speaks. However, He only speaks what He hears from the Father or the Son. If we treat the Holy Spirit as a separate member of the Godhead, the Bible will make sense – *just as it reads*. The next paragraph will demonstrate a sample of this.

In John 16:7 Jesus said to His disciples, **"It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you."** When Jesus spoke these words, He knew three things. First, Jesus knew that Jerusalem would be destroyed in A.D. 70 and the disciples would be scattered throughout the world. (Matthew 24)

Second, Jesus knew that the Father's original plan (Plan A) to implement the kingdom of God on Earth during the seventieth week would not be fulfilled. Third, Jesus knew that He would be leaving Earth and returning to Heaven within a few days. (John 14:1-3) When we understand that Jesus does not have the ability to be omnipresent, His words concerning the Holy Spirit make perfect sense *just as they read!*

In essence, Jesus told His disciples that through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, He would be closer and nearer to each of them, no matter where they went after Jerusalem was destroyed. This is why it was beneficial for them that He left Earth. The Holy Spirit would be sent to them and He would be able to be with all of them no matter where they went. (For a discussion on Plan A and Plan B and the relationship to the seventieth week, please see Appendices B & D in my book, *Jesus' Final Victory*.)

Jesus also said, **"Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. . . ."** Jesus meant that on resurrection Sunday, He would ascend to the Father. The Father was very pleased with all that Jesus had done for the redemption of mankind, but the Father was not pleased with the way Israel had treated Jesus. Because the kingdom of God could not be established on Earth as planned (Plan A), the Father gave Jesus "all necessary authority" to establish His church on Earth. (Matthew 28:18)

Jesus knew that Lucifer and his demons would do everything possible to destroy His church.

Therefore, a few days after ascending to Heaven, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to Earth on a mission. Jesus knew the most convincing way to overcome the religious paradigms of the Jews and establish His church throughout the Roman Empire was through miracles and evidence of divine power. (See Acts 14:3.)

Jesus also knew that His believers would not have sufficient wisdom and insight on managing and directing His church. Therefore, He promised to send "The Counselor" or "The Advisor" to them. Through the power and ministry of the Holy Spirit, a new religious body would not only begin, it would manage, against all odds and demonic assaults, to endure persecution and apostasy for centuries to come.

The book of Acts tells a compelling story about how the power and ministry of the Holy Spirit enabled a few fishermen to change the course of human history. The Holy Spirit could do things for the church that Jesus Himself could not do if He remained on Earth. This why Jesus was taken from Earth and the Holy Spirit was sent!

Often people wonder, "If the Holy Spirit has always existed, why did God wait thousands of years to pour out the Holy Spirit at Pentecost?" The outpouring of the Holy Spirit during the first century A.D. was a special manifestation of divine power designed to achieve a special outcome. However, the work of the Holy Spirit on individuals prior to Pentecost and the work of the Holy Spirit on individuals after Pentecost did not change.

Here is the story: Religion is a powerful paradigm (it controls what most people will consider about God). Remember, Jesus knew "the most convincing way to establish His church in Jerusalem and elsewhere in the Roman Empire was through a display of divine power." People in Bible times did not know much about Earth sciences and they did not have a thousand explanations which technology has provided for us today. Therefore, the ancients were prone to superstition and fear of "the unexplained."

When the Holy Spirit descended at Pentecost, there was a great wind (intimidation), tongues of fire appeared on the heads of the disciples (the anointing of chosen people), and the gospel was heard in many languages (the gift of tongues). This phenomena was instantly deemed "an act of God" and 3,000 souls were baptized into Christ on the basis of what they saw and heard.

This show of divine power gave the gospel of Jesus a huge dose of credibility and in turn, the church of Christ received a huge boost in membership. The rest of the story, recorded in Acts, is church history. Early Christians regarded Pentecost as the birthplace of Christ's church. (See John 7:39)

Unfortunately, early Christians poorly understood their new religion. They knew just enough to abandon their former ways. Therefore, the first century A.D. was marked by Holy Spirit power much like the Great Tribulation will be marked by Holy Spirit power during 1,260 days. (Revelation 11:3)

Through the ages, the Holy Spirit has been "poured out" on various people. For example, the Holy Spirit came upon Saul (1 Samuel 19:23), David (1 Samuel 16 &17), Gideon, (Judges 6:34)

and Philip (Acts 8:39). In each case Jesus wanted people to know that He had chosen certain people to do or say certain things.

Do not forget, the Holy Spirit is omnipresent. He is at work at all times and in all places, edifying the body of Christ with gifts of all kinds. (1 Corinthians 12-14). He is also at work in every human heart as long as we permit Him to dwell within.

Special events and manifestations of the Holy Spirit (such as those at Pentecost) are not to be confused with the still small voice of the Holy Spirit calling us to walk with God. Look closely at this text: **"Then the Lord said [to Noah], 'My Spirit will not contend with man forever, for he is mortal; his days will be a hundred and twenty years.'**" (Genesis 6:3, insertion and emphasis mine) The Lord indicated the Holy Spirit would not endlessly contend with the antediluvians.

"The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the Earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. The Lord was grieved that he had made man on the Earth, and his heart was filled with pain." (Genesis 6:5,6, emphasis mine)

Corporately speaking, a majority of the people in Noah's day committed the unpardonable sin. The Holy Spirit could not soften the rebellious hearts of the antediluvians. Therefore, God had to destroy the whole world for the benefit of oncoming generations. The same is true of the world today. All signs indicate we have passed the point of no return. Our world (corporately speaking) will not repent and reform. According to the books of Daniel and Revelation, God's wrath will come just as He said it would.

I know this has been a lengthy article. I hope this study has been helpful. I hope you will read through it a couple times and pray about it. At first, you may think this topic is not very important and to be honest, understanding this topic is not required for salvation.

However, if you wish to understand the Bible in general and apocalyptic prophecy in particular, you need to understand this topic. We have looked at monotheism (one God), polytheism (more than one God) and tritheism (three Gods). The fullness of Deity is within Jesus just as the Father has the fullness of Deity within Himself. (Colossians 2:9) Jesus is not the Father and the Father is not Jesus or the Holy Spirit. I believe three separate, distinct, co-eternal deities function as One, One in purpose, plan, and action and they are forever committed to this arrangement. What an amazing demonstration of love!

Larry Wilson