



Intro to the Doctrine of the Trinity Sunday, November 12, 2017
Pastor Don Denyes

Some theologians have said that the Bible is shallow enough for children to wade in and yet deep enough for theologians to drown in. Very few doctrines demonstrate that more clearly than the doctrine of the Trinity. In one sense, it is simple to acknowledge that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Spirit is God. In another sense, people have literally tried for centuries to come up with illustrations that communicate the doctrine—many of them are unhelpful at best, heretical at worst.

Among the common illustrations for the Trinity are an apple (skin, flesh, seeds), an egg (shell, white, yolk), water (ice, water, vapor), and the three-leaf clover. Yet all of these illustrations have their faults and do not accurately or adequately explain the Godhead. So, since we cannot totally figure it out, should we just give up thinking and meditating on Him? By no means! The deeper we wade into these theological waters, hopefully, the more God will deepen our sense of awe and dependence on Him.

Context

Serious discussions surrounding the Trinity date back almost as far as the Church itself. However, it didn't start out as an abstract theological debate, but rather as an effort to understand a regular practice in the church. According to church historian Carl Trueman, attempts to understand the Trinity (more clearly) began with an attempt to understand the baptismal formula, "in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28.19), which was recited at the baptism of new converts. Since then, affirmation or denial of the deity of Jesus as the Son of God and the deity of the Holy Spirit have become litmus tests for true, orthodox Christian belief.

Read and Reflect *(Use this section to write down any thoughts you had on the sermon. Make sure to note any questions you had about something in the passage or in the sermon.)*

“The Three Are One”

- 1) Explanations are difficult
 - a. Deut. 6.4-5
 - b. Eph. 4.6
 - c. James 2.19
 - d. Monotheism one God
 - e. False understandings
 - i. Polytheism many gods
 - ii. Tri-theism three gods
 - iii. Modalism one god in three modes
 - f. Athanasian Creed: “We worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; Neither confounding the persons, nor dividing the substance.”
- 2) Examples are prevalent
 - a. Gen. 1.1-3
 - b. Gen. 1.26
 - c. Gen. 11.7
 - d. Is. 6.3, 8
 - e. Mark 1.10-11
 - f. John 14.15-17
 - g. Matt. 28.19
 - h. Rev. 1.4
- 3) Effects are magnificent
 - a. Eph. 1.17 know (Father, Son, Spirit)
 - b. Eph. 1.3-14 praise
 - c. Eph. 2.18 prayer 3.14
 - d. Eph. 4.2 humility
 - e. Eph. 4.3-6 unity 2.18
 - f. Eph. 5.18-20 gratitude

2 Corinthians 13:14: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”

Discuss

- 1) Why do you think some Christians have a reluctance to think deeply about complex issues of theology like the Trinity?
- 2) Read Deuteronomy 29:29. How does that passage inform us on how we should think about the Trinity?
- 3) Pastor Don's first point for application was that we should *know* God as He is revealed in Trinity. Do you have a passion to know God? If so, what do you do to grow deeper in your knowledge of God? If you don't, why is that and what might you do differently?
- 4) How should the doctrine of the Trinity impact the way we think about unity in the Church (see Eph. 2:18; 4:3-6)?
- 5) In what ways does thinking about the doctrine of the Trinity help cultivate humility and gratitude in your life?