

# One God or a Trinity?

by James and Deb Flint

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## INTRODUCTION

When we open God's book the Bible, we read how important it is to have a correct understanding of who God really is, and who Jesus really is. It is so important that Jesus tells us that our salvation depends on it:

*“And this is life eternal, that they might know **You the only true God**, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”* (John 17:3)

## WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH ABOUT GOD?

From the first book to the last, the Bible tells us that God is one God, and there are no other gods besides Him.

Thousands of years ago, God spoke to Israel by Moses, the man who led them out of Egypt:

*“Hear O Israel: the LORD our God is **one LORD**: and you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.”* (Deuteronomy 6:4-5)

Later King David of Israel wrote:

*“O LORD, there is none like you, **neither is there any God beside you**, according to all that we have heard with our ears.”* (1 Chronicles 17:20)

God, speaking through the prophet Isaiah, said:

*“You are My witnesses, says the LORD, and My servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me, and understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, **nor will there be after me**.”* (Isaiah 43:10)

*“For thus says the LORD who created the heavens, who is God, who formed the earth and made it, who has established it, who did not create it in vain, who formed it to be inhabited: ‘I am the LORD, **and there is no other**’.”* (Isaiah 45:18)

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When we come to the New Testament, we find the same message repeated, telling us that God is one. The apostle Paul said:

*“Yet for us there is **only one God**, the Father, of Whom are all things, and we for Him, and one lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live.”* (1 Corinthians 8:6)

*“One lord, one faith, one baptism, **One God and Father of all**, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”* (Ephesians 4:5-6)

*“For there is **one God**, and one mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ.”* (1 Timothy 2:5)

There are many other verses throughout the Bible that tell us that God is the only one true God, and that there are no other gods besides Him.

For a more complete list of references consider the following:

### **God is one:**

Job 31:15; Zechariah 14:9; Malachi 2:10; Matthew 19:17, 23:9; Mark 2:7, 10:18, 12:29,32; Luke 18:19; John 8:41; Romans 3:30; 1 Corinthians 8:4,6; Galatians 3:20; Ephesians 4:6; 1 Timothy 2:5; James 2:19, 4:12.

### **The LORD (Yahweh) is the only true God:**

Exodus 8:10, 9:14, Deuteronomy 4:35-39, 7:9, 32:12-40; 1 Samuel 2:2; 2 Samuel 7:22, 22:32; 1 Kings 8:23,39,60, 18:17-39; 2 Kings 5:15, 19:15-19; 1 Chronicles 16:25-26; 2 Chronicles 6:14, 13:9; Nehemiah 9:6; Job 9:8; Psalms 18:31, 62:2,5-6, 71:16,19, 72:18, 73,25, 83:18, 86:8-10, 89:6-11, 90:1-2, 96:4-5, 118:27; 136:4, 148:13; Isaiah 37:16-20, 40:18-25, 41:4, 43:10-13, 44:6-8,24, 45:5-7,14,18,21-22, 46:9; Jeremiah 3:11, 5:7, 10:6-16, 16:20; Hosea 13:4; Joel 2:27; Mark 12:32; John 13:16, 14:28, 17:3; Acts 19:26; Romans 16:27; 1 Corinthians 8:4-6, 10:20; Galatians 4:8; 1 Timothy 1:17, 2:5, 6:15-16; 1 John 5:20; Jude 25; Revelation 15:4.

### **The Father alone is the one true God:**

Deuteronomy 32:6; 2 Samuel 7:8-14; 1 Chronicles 17:11-14, 29:10; Psalms 2:7, 89:26-29; Isaiah 42:1, 61:1-2, 63:16, 64:8; Jeremiah 3:4,19, 31:9; Malachi 1:6, 2:10; Matthew 11:25, 24:36; Mark 10:18, 13:32; Luke 10:21, 18:19; John 1:18, 5:43-44, 6:27,45, 8:41-42,54, 14:28, 17:1-3, 20:17; Acts 7:55-56; Romans 1:7, 15:6; 1 Corinthians 1:3, 8:6, 11:3, 15:24; 2 Corinthians 1:2-3, 11:31; Galatians 1:1-5; Ephesians 1:2-3,17, 4:5-6, 5:20, 6:23; Philippians 1:2, 2:11, 4:20; Colossians 1:2-3, 3:17; 1 Thessalonians 1:1-3, 3:11,13; 2 Thessalonians 1:1-2, 2:16; 1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:2; Titus 1:4; Philemon 3; Hebrews 12:7; James 1:27, 3:9; 1 Peter 1:2-3; 2 Peter 1:17; 2 John 3,9; Jude 1; Revelation 1:6.

### **The LORD God (the Father) is Almighty and Supreme:**

Genesis 18:25; Exodus 20:3-5, 22:20; Deuteronomy 10:17; Joshua 3:11,13, 22:22; 1 Samuel 7:3-4; 1 Kings 18:17-39; 1 Chronicles 29:11; Psalm 47:2,7, 83:18, 97:9, 110:1,136:1-26; Isaiah 2:11,17, 26:13-14, 44:24; Daniel 2:47, 3:29, 11:36; Zechariah 6:5, Matthew 4:10, 24:36, Mark 5:7, Luke 4:8, 8:28, John 5:44; Acts 7:48, 16:17; Romans 16:27; 1 Corinthians 3:23, 11:3, 15:24-28; 2 Corinthians 6:18; Ephesians 3:14, 4:6; 1 Timothy 1:17, 6:14-16; Hebrews 7:1; Jude 25; Revelation 1:8, 4:8, 11:17, 15:3-4, 16:7,14, 19:6,15, 21:22.

### **WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH ABOUT JESUS?**

The Bible reveals that the Lord Jesus Christ is God's only son, born of the virgin Mary to take away the sins of the world.

God, through the power of the Holy Spirit, enabled Mary to conceive and have a baby named Jesus:

*“And, behold, you will **conceive** in your womb, and bring forth a son, and shall call his name JESUS. He will be great, and **will be called the Son of the Highest**: and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David. And he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there will be no end. Then said Mary to the angel, How can this be, since I do not know a man? And the angel answered and said to her, The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you: therefore, also, that holy one **who is to be born** of you **will be called the son of God.**” (Luke 1:31-35)*

*“But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth his Son, **made of a woman, made under the law.**” (Galatians 4:4)*

Therefore Jesus Christ was both the Son of God and the Son of Man (by a woman), as God was his Father and Mary his mother.

### **Son of God,**

Because Jesus was literally the son of God, he had a real father-son relationship with God.

*“Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears **to Him who was able to save him from death**, and was heard because of his godly fear. Though he was a son, **yet he learned obedience** by what he suffered”. (Hebrews 5:7-8)*

He learned from, and spoke to his Father often:

*“And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.” (Luke 6:12)*

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### Son of Man

As the son of man, Jesus inherited a mortal nature and the temptation to sin:

*“In as much then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, **he himself likewise shared in the same**; that through death he might destroy him who had the power of death, that is the devil” (Hebrews 2:14)*

*“For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son **in the likeness of sinful flesh**, on account of sin, condemned sin in the flesh” (Romans 8:3)*

For more complete references please consider the following verses:

### Jesus began his life at birth:

Genesis 3:15, 13:15, 17:8, 22:18; Deuteronomy 9:6,7, 18:15-19; 2 Samuel 7:11-14; 1 Chronicles 17:11-14; Psalm 89:27, 139:15-16; Isaiah 7:14, 49:1-5; Jeremiah 1:5, 30:21; Micah 5:2-5; Matthew 1:20-24, 2:1-6; 13:35, 25:34; Luke 1:30-35 (see 1:13-17), 2:40,52 (see 1:80), 11:50; John 7:42, 8:56, 12:41, 17:5,24; Acts 2:22-24, 15:18; Romans 4:17, 8:28-30, 9:23, 11:2; 1 Corinthians 2:7; Galatians 1:15, 3:16, 4:4; Ephesians 1:3-5; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 1:9-10; Titus 1:2-3; 1 Peter 1:1-2,11,19-21; Revelation 13:8, 17:8.

### Jesus as Son of God and Son of Man:

Numbers 23:19; Deuteronomy 18:15-19; 1 Samuel 15:29; Job 9:32-33, 33:12; Psalm 80:17; Isaiah 47:3, 55:8-9; Jeremiah 30:12; Zechariah 6:12, 13:7; Malachi 3:6; Matthew 24:30-44; Mark 13:26; Luke 21:27,36; John 3:2, 8:40, 19:5; Acts 2:22, 7:56, 13:38, 17:31; Romans 5:15; 1 Corinthians 15:21,47; Ephesians 2:15, 4:13; 1 Timothy 2:5; Revelation 1:13, 4:14.

### ARE GOD AND JESUS THE SAME?

We have seen that the Bible teaches there is only one God and Jesus Christ is His son. Is it possible that Jesus and God are both made of the same substance, or are both co-equal and co-eternal?

The following tables highlight some of the differences between Jesus and God, which have been recorded for us in God’s Word:

These differences demonstrate that God and Jesus are two unique, different beings.

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The change in belief is summarized as follows:

### God cannot be tempted

*“Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted by God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, nor does he tempt any man:”* (James 1:13)

### God cannot be seen

*“dwelling in inapproachable light; whom no man has seen, nor can see.”* (1 Timothy 6:16)

### God knows everything

*“Can anyone hide himself in secret places so that I will not see him? says the LORD. Do not I fill heaven and earth?”* (Jeremiah 23:24)

### God cannot die

*“See now that I, even I, am He, and there is no god with me... **I live for ever.**”* (Deuteronomy 32:39-40)

*“Who **only** hath immortality”* (1 Timothy 6:16)

### Jesus was tempted

*“Because himself hath suffered when **he was tempted**, he is able to help those who are tempted.”* (Hebrews 2:18)

*“For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses; but was **in all points tempted as we are**, yet without sin.”* (Hebrews 4:14-15)

### Jesus was seen

*“This is now the third time that Jesus showed himself to his disciples, after he was raised from the dead.”* (John 21:14)

### Jesus learnt

*“And Jesus **increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.**”* (Luke 2:52)

*“Though he was a Son, yet **he learned obedience** by the things which he suffered;”* (Hebrews 5:8)

*“But of that day and that hour no one knows, neither the angels which are in heaven, **nor the Son**, but only the Father.”* (Mark 13:32)

### Jesus died

*“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that **Christ died** for our sins according to the scriptures.”* (1 Corinthians 15:3)

*“I am he that liveth, and **was dead**; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen;”* (Revelation 1:18)

### God is subject to no one

*“I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another,”* (Isaiah 42:8)

### Jesus is subject to God

*“my Father is **greater than I.**”* (John 14:28)

*“But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of woman is man; **and the head of Christ is God.**”* (1 Corinthians 11:3)

*“Then the son also will be **subject to Him** that put all things under him”* (1 Corinthians 15:28)

### God is everlasting

*“Now unto the King, eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever”* (1 Timothy 1:17)

### Jesus was created

*“But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, **made** of a woman, **made** under the law.”* (Galatians 4:4)

*“... You are my Son, today I have **begotten** you”* (Hebrews 1:5)

### God is all powerful

*“Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?”* (Jeremiah 32:27)

*“Thus says the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker; “Ask me of things to come concerning My sons, and concerning the work of My hands, you command Me. I have made the earth, and created man on it. It was I - My hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host I have commanded.”* (Isaiah 45:11-12)

### Jesus is not all powerful

*“Then answered Jesus and said to them; Most assuredly, I say to you, **the Son can do nothing of Himself**, but what he sees the Father do: for whatever he does, the Son also does in like manner. For the Father loves the Son, and shows him all things that himself does”* (John 5:19-20)

*“Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with vehement crys and tears **to Him who was able to save him from death**, and was heard because of his godly fear;”* (Hebrews 5:7-8)



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### God is Perfect

*“Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”* (Matthew 5:48)

### God does not change

*“For I am the LORD, I do not change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed.”* (Malachi 3:6)

### God has no god

*“Thus says the LORD... I am the first, and I am the last. besides me there is no God.... Is there a God besides me? Indeed there is no other rock; I know not one.”* (Isaiah 44:6,8)

### God is not a man

*“God is not a man, that He should lie; nor a son of man, that he should repent: Has he said, and will not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not make it good?”* (Numbers 23:19)

### Jesus had to be made perfect

*“And having been perfected, he **became** the author of eternal salvation”* (Hebrews 5:9)

*“Why do you call me good? **No one is good but One, that is, God**”* (Luke 18:19)

### Jesus did change

*“You (God) **made him a little lower** than the angels, You **crowned him** with glory and honour, and **set him over** the work of Your hands”* (Hebrews 2:7).

### Jesus has a God

*“Do not cling to me; for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren, and say to them, I am ascending to my Father, and your Father; and to **my God, and your God.**”* (John 20:17)

### Jesus is a man

*“Jesus of Nazareth, **a man** attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs, which God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves also know:”* (Acts 2:22)

*“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, **the man Christ Jesus;**”* (1 Timothy 2:5).

**These differences demonstrate that God and Jesus are two unique, different beings.**

### THE TRINITY

So far in this booklet everything that was said was supported by quotes from the Bible, and only the Bible. However when discussing the Trinity that will not be possible, because the Trinity is something that originates from outside the Bible.

Nowhere in the Bible do we find the word ‘Trinity’, nor do we find the Trinitarian terms ‘God the son’ or ‘God the Holy Spirit’.

Religious historians and commentators, who believe in the doctrine of the Trinity, admit that the doctrine is not a teaching from the Old Testament:

*“Exegetes and theologians today are in agreement that the Hebrew Bible does not contain the doctrine of the Trinity.”* (Mircea, E, editor. The Encyclopedia of Religion, Trinity. New York; 1987; 15:54)

Do we read of the Trinity in the New Testament? In the same publication, we read:

*“Exegetes and theologians agree that the New Testament also does not contain an explicit doctrine of the Trinity.”* (Mircea, E, editor. The Encyclopedia of Religion, Trinity. New York; 1987; 15:54)

The gradual development of the doctrine of the Trinity, after the completion of the Bible, is well known and not denied even by those who believe the doctrine. Consider the statement from the New Catholic Encyclopedia:

*“The formulation ‘one God in three persons’ was not solidly established, certainly not fully assimilated into Christian life and its profession of faith, prior to the end of the 4th century. But it is precisely this formulation that has first claim to the title of Trinitarian dogma. Among the Apostolic Fathers, there had been nothing even remotely approaching such a mentality or perspective.”* (New Catholic Encyclopedia. New York: Guild Publishers; 1967-1974. Trinity; 14:299)

How is it that the doctrine of the Trinity, which is not to be found in God’s Word, has become such a popular church teaching? If the ideas shaping the doctrine of the Trinity do not come from the Apostolic Fathers, where did these ideas come from?

### WHERE DID THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY COME FROM?

Trinities of gods were taught in non-Christian religions since ancient times. In Mesopotamia one such ‘trinity’ was Anu (the god of the sky), Enlil (the god of the earth) and Ea (the god of the waters). Another trinity, in ancient Babylon, was made up of the three gods Nimrod, Semiramas and Tammuz. Grouping of gods in triads was also common in Egypt, Greece and Rome in the centuries before and after Christ.

After the death of the apostles, such ideas began to come into Christianity, Seigfried Morenz in his book ‘Egyptian Religion’ notes:

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*“...the trinity was a major preoccupation of Egyptian theologies... three gods are combined and treated as a single being addressed as singular. In this way the spiritual force of Egyptian religion shows a direct link with Christian theology.”* (Morenz, S. Egyptian Religion. Cornell: University Press; 1973:254-257)

It is interesting that it was in Egypt that the subject of the Trinity was discussed by the church leaders, because in the preface to Edward Gibbon’s ‘History of Christianity’ we read of the influence of Egyptian religion on their discussions:

*“If Paganism was conquered by Christianity, it is equally true that Christianity was corrupted by Paganism. The pure Deism of the first century Christians ... was changed by the Church of Rome, into the incomprehensible dogma of the Trinity. Many of the pagan tenets, invented by the Egyptians and idealized by Plato, were retained as being worthy of belief.”* (E. Gibbon. History of Christianity. Republished by Arno Press; 1972)

The powerful influence that non-Christian philosophies had on Christianity is again acknowledged in a religious dictionary:

*“The Trinity is a corruption borrowed from the heathen religions, and engrafted on the Christian faith.”* (A Dictionary of Religious Knowledge. Lyman Abbott; 1875. section on ‘Trinity’ p944)

Some of these ancient trinities are still worshipped today. In Egypt, a trinity (made up of the three gods called Osiris, Isis and Horus) is worshipped. Likewise in India, the three gods, Brahma, Shiva and Vishnu, are worshipped as a trinity in the Hindu faith.

Another great influence on the development of the Christian Trinity were the teachings of the Greek Philosopher Plato. At the center of Plato’s philosophy, was the teaching of a trinity made up of the “Unknown Father”, “the Logos” or reason and the “World Soul”. The following quotation from a historian highlights the great influence Plato’s philosophies had on people during the time period when the doctrine of the Trinity was being developed:

*“It may be doubted whether Plato himself impersonated the Logos, the reason of the Deity; with him it was rather an attribute of the Godhead... Platonism had gradually absorbed all the more intellectual class... (Plato’s philosophy) was attempting to renew Paganism, and was the recognised and leading tenet in the higher Mysteries.”* (D. Milman. History of Christianity, Vol.2 p355).

Greek Philosophy, such as Plato’s trinity, was popular amongst the intellectual class and was readily accepted by the well-educated and influential church leaders. It was these leaders who formulated the doctrine of the Christian trinity. The following quotation highlights the subtle but powerful influence Greek Philosophy had on Christianity during the period when the doctrine of the Trinity was developed:

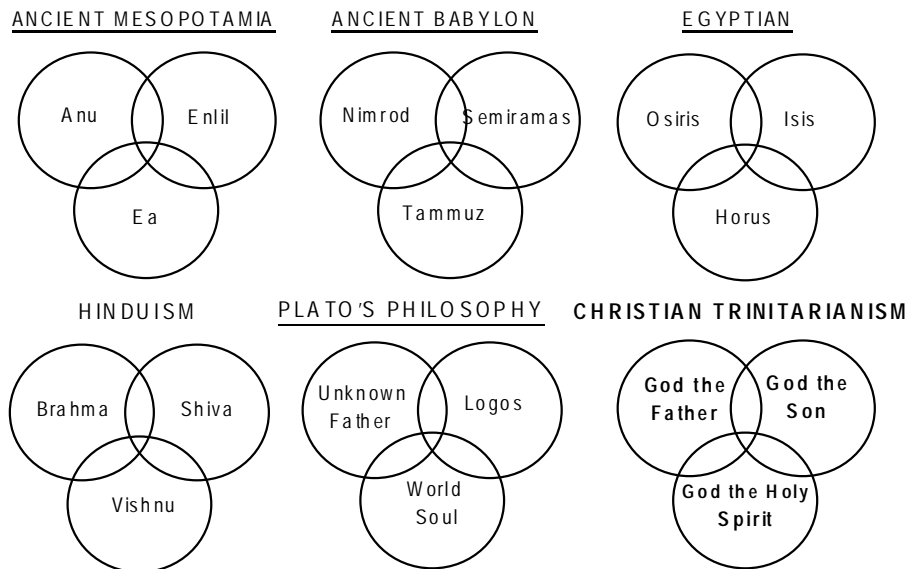
*“This Platonic philosophy was adopted by such of the learned at Alexandria, who wished to be accounted Christians, and yet to retain the name, the garb, and the rank of*

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*philosophers. In particular, all those who in this second century presided in the schools of the Christians at Alexandria, Athenagoras, Pantaenus and Celmens Alexandria, are said to have approved of it. These men were persuaded that true philosophy, the great and most salutary gift of God, lay in scattered fragments among all the sects of philosophers: therefore it was the duty of every wise man, and especially of a Christian teacher, to collect those fragments from all quarters, and to use them in defense of religion.” (J. Mosheim. An ecclesiastical history. Charlestown; 1694-1755 :1:152)*

The trinities of various religious groups, including Plato’s, are summarized in the diagram below.



### HISTORY OF THE TRINITY

The influence of paganism and Greek philosophy on Christianity resulted in church debate and division. In an effort to resolve the division of the Christian church, the Roman Emperor Constantine called for a special meeting of church leaders. Although Constantine was not greatly concerned about Christian doctrine, he clearly understood that religious division was a threat to his empire. The meeting he ordered was held in 325 AD, and became known as the Council of Nicaea. Despite his basic understanding of Christian teachings, Constantine presided and actively guided the discussions at this meeting.

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It was at this Council of Nicaea it was decided that Christ was made of the same substance as God. In the Creed written at the council no mention was made of the Holy Spirit being a third person of the Godhead (that came later). It was however, a very significant meeting that laid the foundation for the doctrine of the Trinity.

Those who rejected the decision made at the Council of Nicaea, and refused to accept that God and Jesus were equal, continued for a short time. However, emperor Theodosius decided against them, confirmed the Nicene Creed, and called for another Council meeting. It was at this meeting, the Council of Constantinople in 381 AD, that the church leaders decided the Holy Spirit was on the same level as God and Christ. For the first time, the doctrine of the Trinity came into being.

Even after this Council of Constantinople, there were many that opposed the teaching, and often paid with their lives for expressing their views. The Trinity was more fully defined and recorded as the Athanasian creed which states:

*“We worship one God in trinity, and trinity in unity, neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance. For the person of the Father is one; of the Son, another; of the Holy Spirit, another. But the divinity of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit is one, the glory equal, the majesty equal. Such as is the Father, such also is the Son, and such the Holy Spirit. The Father is uncreated, the Son is uncreated, the Holy Spirit is uncreated. The Father is infinite, the Son is infinite, the Holy Spirit is infinite. The Father is eternal, the Son is eternal, the Holy Spirit is eternal. And yet there are not three eternal Beings, but one eternal Being. So also there are not three uncreated Beings, nor three infinite Beings, but one uncreated and one infinite Being. In like manner, the Father is omnipotent, the Son is omnipotent, and the Holy Spirit is omnipotent. And yet there are not three omnipotent Beings, but one omnipotent Being. Thus the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. And yet there are not three Gods, but one God only. The Father is Lord, the Son is Lord, and the Holy Spirit is Lord. And yet there are not three Lords, but one Lord only. For as we are compelled by Christian truth to confess each person distinctively to be both God and Lord, we are prohibited by the Catholic religion to say that there are three Gods or Lords. The Father is made by none, nor created, nor begotten. The Son is from the Father alone, not made, not created, but begotten. The Holy Spirit is not created by the Father and the Son, nor begotten, but proceeds. Therefore, there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Spirit, not three Holy Spirits. And in this Trinity there is nothing prior or posterior, nothing greater or less, but all three persons are coeternal and coequal to themselves. So that through all, as was said above, both unity in trinity and trinity in unity is to be adored. Whoever would be saved, let him thus think concerning the Trinity.”*

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The complexity of the creed is striking. Consider the difference between the Athanasian creed, recorded after the Council of Constantinople in 381 AD, and the simple ‘Apostles’ Creed’ of around 150 AD:

*I believe in God Almighty,  
And in Christ Jesus, His only Son, our Lord,  
Who was born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary.  
Who was crucified under Pontius Pilate and was buried. And the third day rose from  
the dead  
Who ascended into heaven,  
And sits on the right hand of the Father,  
From where he comes to judge the living and the dead;  
And in the Holy Spirit  
The holy church,  
The resurrection of the flesh,  
The life everlasting.*

**The change in belief is summarized as follows:**

<b>Apostles Creed</b>		<b>Athanasian Creed</b>
God Almighty	—————>	God the Father
Jesus Christ His only Son	—————>	God the Son
born of the Holy Spirit	—————>	God the Holy Spirit

### **MORE RECENT HISTORY OF THE TRINITY**

For much of Christianity’s history the penalty for denying the doctrine of the Trinity was death. For example the British parliament in 1648 passed a law making it compulsory to execute the death penalty on anyone opposing Trinitarian teaching. It wasn’t until 1813 that the death penalty for those opposing the Trinity was removed from British Law.

During these times there were those who risked death and continued to deny the teaching of the Trinity stating it was introduced from non-Biblical sources. So strong was their faith in the truth of the Bible they were willing to die rather than accept a false teaching which was introduced only years after Christ.

### **How did this happen?**

When Christianity was forced upon pagan Rome, many pagan teachings were absorbed into Christianity and the pure Christian teachings of the first century were polluted. Although many converted in name to Christianity, they still held on to their pagan practices and beliefs. The church compromised for those accepting this new faith, and permitted many pagan teachings and ideas to be mixed with Christianity. The Trinity is only the most obvious of the non-Biblical ideas to have entered into Christian thinking.

### **How could God allow this to happen?**

For many Christians it is almost unthinkable that God would have allowed such a thing to happen. But it should not be. The Old Testament tells how God's people Israel repeatedly turned from God's teachings to many false religious practices (including worship of idols). Why should New Testament believers be any better?

In fact God not only allowed it to happen, in the Bible He warns us that the teachings of the church would be corrupted:

*"Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day will not come, unless there is a falling away first" (2 Thessalonians 2:3)*

*"For I know this, that after my departure grievous wolves will enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:29-30)*

*"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts they will heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears. And they will turn away their ears from the truth, and will be turned to fables" (2 Timothy 4:3-4)*

*"There will be false teachers among you... many will follow their pernicious ways; because of whom the way of truth will be evil spoken of" (2 Peter 2:1)*

*"... many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1-3)*

Living nearly 2000 years after these words were written, we have the benefit of looking back over history and seeing the changes that have occurred in Christian doctrine. If we believe that the Bible's warnings are true, then we should be able to identify these changes, reject them and return to true Christianity. The only way we can be sure we believe the truth, is to carefully study the Bible for ourselves. We must be careful to study the whole Bible and not simply look for isolated verses and make them fit our existing beliefs.

Many Christians, who in sincerity believe the Trinity, are unaware of the many influences outside the Bible that shaped the doctrine. In an effort to find proof for their beliefs they often use isolated verses and ignore the context in which the verses were written. Here is an example:

### **I and my Father are one.**

*"I and my Father are one." (John 10:30)*

If we were to take this verse in isolation we might be excused for thinking that John supported the doctrine of the trinity, although there is no mention of the Holy Spirit.

The problem with making this verse into a Trinitarian statement is that to 'be one' in Bible language does not mean to be one person, it means to agree:

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*“that they may be one, as You, Father, are in me, and I in You; **that they also may be one** in us, that the world may believe that You sent me”.* (John 17:21)

In context, when reading the rest of the chapter it is seen that Jesus is not saying he is God at all. In the verse before, Jesus clearly says that he is not equal to His father:

*“My Father, **who gave them to me, is greater than all**; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.”* (John 10:29)

The Jews who hated Jesus and were always looking for an excuse to kill him, accused him of blasphemy and of making himself equal with God:

*“The Jews answered him, saying, ‘We do not stone you for a good work, but for blasphemy; and because you, being a man, make yourself God.’”* (John 10:33)

This was their accusation, but Jesus of course did not blaspheme, and he did not say he was God. Jesus corrects them in the next verse:

*“Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, ‘I said, You are gods’? If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken, why do you say of him, whom the Father has sanctified, and sent into the world, ‘You blaspheme’, **because I said, I am the Son of God**? If I do not do the works of my Father, then do not believe me. But if I do, though you do not believe me, then believe the works: that you may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him.”* (John 10:34-38)

When Jesus said: *“Is it not written in your law; ‘I said, You are gods’”* he was quoting from Psalm 82 where the divinely appointed priests and elders of Israel were given the title of ‘gods’. They were given this title because they acted on behalf of God and spoke in the name of God. Therefore, Jesus is saying, “if men in the Old Testament were called ‘God’, why are you getting so upset when I am simply saying I am the Son of God?”

Putting this verse into context with the rest of the chapter, the rest of the book and the rest of John’s writings, it becomes clear that Jesus was saying he was of one mind with God:

*“As the Father knows me, even so know I the Father.”* (John 10:15)

In the same way Jesus was one with the Father, we can also be one with Jesus and the Father:

### **IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD**

In the first chapter of John we read the following words:

*“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him.”* (John 1:1-3)



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There is probably no verse in the Bible which has caused more disagreement. This is because it is undeniably a difficult verse. However the most common understanding of the verse goes something like this:

*“At the creation of the world was Christ, and the Christ was with God, and Christ was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All the world was made by him.”* (John 1:1-3 paraphrase)

The above quote is a paraphrase, a non-literal translation which few people would consider highly reliable, however it does reflect the way that many, if not most, people read John 1:1.

There are seven things which are questionable about the paraphrased reading above:

1. The preface to the Gospel of John is poetry (John 1:1-18). This may be stating the obvious, but it is important to remember this when interpreting the verse.
2. The *“In the beginning...”* of John is obviously related in some way to the *“in the beginning”* of Genesis 1:1, but comparison with the same *“beginning”* in 1 John 1:1 (a letter which may have accompanied John’s Gospel) shows that the *“beginning”* which John is talking about, concerns not the beginning of the earth, but the beginning of the Gospel witnessed by the apostles (compare the use of the same Greek word ‘beginning’ in Mark 1:1, Luke 1:2, John 6:64, 8:25, 15:27, 16:4, 1st John 1:1, 2:7,13,24, 3:11, 2nd John 5,6). Rather than being the *“in the beginning”* of Genesis 1:1, John is making a comparison between the Genesis *“beginning”*, and the more important new *“beginning”* found in his own Gospel. It also is worth noting here that the word *“Beginning”* is a title of Christ (Colossians 1:18, Revelation 3:14, 21:6, 22:13).
3. *“...was the Word”*: John’s *“word”* is obviously closely related in some way to Christ, but the *“word”* is not simply another name for Jesus. If John had meant to write *‘in the beginning was Jesus Christ’* then he would have done so. Also it is often overlooked that the *“word”* is only one key word here; the ‘Life’ (vs.4), and the ‘Light’ (vs.7-9), are also parts of what John is saying. None of these words, ‘Word’, ‘Life’, ‘Light’ are simple substitutions for the name of Jesus of Nazareth.
4. *“...and the Word was with God”*: Even without any knowledge of the original Bible languages it is clear that what follows cannot be the simple statement *“Jesus = God”* that people want to read, because if the Word is simply Jesus he cannot physically be *“with God”* (on the right hand of God perhaps?) and yet *“be God”* at the same time.
5. *“...and the Word was God”*: This is not the only possible translation of this phrase. Alternative renderings have included *“and what God was, the Word was”*, *“the Word was divine”* and so on. But if we remember what Christ himself said about the meaning of the word *“gods”* in John 10:34-35 (mentioned earlier) then this does not have to be the Trinitarian statement that many think.

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6. “*He..*”: The choice of “*he*” rather than “*it*” is the work of the English Bible translators, not John. The pronoun here is no different from the usual word for ‘it’ used for ‘word’ when it occurs in other contexts. The same is true of the capital ‘W’ of “*the Word*” - this is not in the original text. It is odd that the translators give “*he*” and a capital letter to “*Word*”, but do not always do so for “*life*” and “*light*” - again this is not a distinction made by John.
7. “*.. was in the beginning with God*”: This is a repeat of John’s earlier “*with God*” statement, but in different words. John’s repeated emphasis here that the Word is something that is **present** with God, but **distinct** from God, is often overlooked. John is choosing words carefully here to make clear that the word is **not** identical to God. Most importantly John repeats in 1:2 the important time factor; When was the word with God? - “*in the beginning*” - the Mark 1:1 beginning not Genesis 1:1.
8. “*All things were made by him...*”: This is a major key to the context. By comparing this with the rest of John’s writings we can see that by “*all things*” John is not primarily concerned with the plants and animals of Genesis. What John is concerned with here, and throughout his writings, is the “*new creation*” found in the New Testament - which is very different from the old creation of Genesis. Similar language is used by Paul in Colossians 1:16 and Ephesians 3:9, but in both cases comparison with Paul’s context (compare Colossians 1:15-18, 3:9-10 and Ephesians 2:10, 3:10, 4:24) shows that the creation which Paul is referring to was made by means of Christ. This new creation is the creation of new men and women who are born again, and has nothing to do with the old creation of Adam and Eve who were born of the dust (compare 2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 6:15, James 1:18, Revelation 3:14).

### LOGOS

A correct understanding of John 1:1-3 hinges on appreciating what “*the Word*” means in context. The Greek word “logos” (which is translated “word” in John 1), does not in itself mean “Jesus”.

The word ‘logos’ is also translated elsewhere in the Bible as: *account, communication, intent, reason, tidings, cause, doctrine, preaching and saying*.

“*Logos - A word, uttered by a living voice, embodies a conception or idea.*” (Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon, Oak Harbor, WA: 1995)

Further we read in Strong’s Greek dictionary that:

“*A Greek philosopher named Heraclitus first used the term Logos around 600 B.C. to designate the divine reason or plan which coordinates a changing universe. This word was well suited to John’s purpose in John 1.*” (Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon, Oak Harbor, WA, 1995)

The word “logos” can refer to the inner thought (a divine reason) which is expressed outwardly in words or other communication. In the beginning God had this inner

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thought. His singular purpose was centered in Christ. When Christ was born, this “word” was turned into flesh and blood. Jesus was *“the word made flesh”* (John 1:14). The thought, the purpose, the reason that was in God’s mind in the beginning, (the “logos”) was expressed outwardly in the person of Jesus Christ.

What about *“the Word was God”*? Remembering that the “Word” is God’s inner thinking or purpose, we read in Proverbs:

*“As he (a man) thinks in his heart, so is he.”* (Proverbs 23:7)

The same is also true of God. As God thinks, so is He. Therefore God’s thinking (His “logos”) is God, *“the word was God”*.

*“No man has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwells in us, and His love is perfected in us... Whoever will confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwells in him, and he in God... God is love; and he who dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him.”* (1 John 4:12-15)

### CONCLUSION

Within the pages of God’s word, we have all the information we need to be saved, it alone is the source of truth:

*“And that from a child you have known the holy scriptures, which are able to make you wise to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished to all good works”* (2 Timothy 3:15-17)

We read throughout the pages of the Old and New Testaments that:

- ✧ God is the almighty creator, the Father and the only one true God.
- ✧ Jesus Christ is His son, born of Mary after the power of the Holy Spirit came upon her, and caused her to conceive.

### THE 3 BIG PROBLEMS WITH THE TRINITY

If God is a Trinity, why didn’t He tell us in His Book the Bible?

If Jesus is coequal with God, why did he say *“my Father is greater than I”* (John 14:28)?

How is it possible that an important doctrine would be developed many hundreds of years after the deaths of the apostles? Why should we believe a doctrine that is not clearly recorded in God’s word, especially since we are warned:

*“... If any one preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed!”* (Galatians 1:9)

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Rejecting the doctrine of the Trinity means taking a stand that will make you unwelcome in the majority of churches. However, these churches teach the Trinity not because it is in the Bible, but because it was forced on the entire Christian world in the 4th Century, and any questioning of the doctrine was punished with persecution in most of the centuries since. Today the reaction of the majority is not persecution but an emotional response - scorn, fear or anger - which is easier to deal with, but still unpleasant and intimidating.

In the time of Christ, the true believers were only a minority and Christ encourages them, and us, with the following words:

*“Enter in by the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in there: Because narrow is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”* (Matthew 7:13-14)

*“For many are called, but few are chosen.”* (Matthew 22:14)

If we are serious about our salvation, which depends on us knowing the only true God and Jesus Christ (John 17:3), then we must be serious about studying God’s Word and understanding the truth. Take the wonderful example of the people of Berea who:

*“... received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”* (Acts 17:11)

If we are to open God’s word and read it in an intelligent and logical manner, putting aside our preconceived ideas, accepting all we see and not brushing aside those things in the Bible which conflict with what we have been told before, only then we will really learn what God is telling us. The truth is like *“hidden treasure”* (Matthew 13:44), we must search it out with determination and commitment. Finally, consider the words of wise King Solomon:

*“... incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; Yes, if you cry after knowledge, and lift up your voice for understanding; If you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; Then you will understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom: out of His mouth comes knowledge and understanding.”* (Proverbs 2:2)

**James and Deb Flint**

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### QUESTIONS

1. What does the Bible teach about God?
2. What does the Bible teach about Jesus?
3. Are God and Jesus equal?
4. Where was Jesus before he was born?
5. List 5 differences between Jesus and God
6. Does the Bible mention the Trinity?
7. Where does the doctrine of the Trinity come from?
8. Explain the meaning of “I and my Father are one”
9. What are the meanings of ‘the Beginning’ in John?
10. What are the meanings of ‘Logos’?