

A BIBLICAL CASE FOR THE

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TRINITY

# WHAT APOLOGETIC VALUE IS THIS?

- ▶ Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Oneness Pentecostals, and Muslims all reject the Trinity.
- ▶ Aside from Oneness Pentecostals, all above cults/religions deny the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- ▶ “But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart”—that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, that **if** you confess with your mouth **Jesus as Lord**, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.” (Romans 10:8-10, NASB95)

### WAYNE GRUDEM'S THOUGHTS

- ▶ "Is it really essential to hold to the full deity of the son and Holy Spirit? Yes it is. For this teaching has implications for the very heart the Christian faith. If Jesus is merely a created being, and not fully God, then it is hard to see how he, a creature, could bear the full wrath of God against all of our sins. Could any creature, no matter how great, really save us? Second, justification by faith alone is threatened if we denied the full deity of the Son. (This is seen today in the teaching of the Jehovah's Witnesses, who do not believe in justification by faith alone.) If Jesus is not fully God, we would rightly doubt whether we can really trust him to save us completely. Could we really depend on any creature fully for our salvation? Third, if Jesus is not infinite God, should we pray to him or worship him? Who, but an infinite, omniscient God could hear and respond to all the prayers of all God's people? And who but God himself is worthy of worship? Indeed, if Jesus is merely a creature, no matter how great, it would be idolatry to worship him— yet the New Testament commands us to do so (Phil. 2:9-11; Rev. 5:12-14). Fourth, if someone teaches that Christ was a created being but nonetheless one who saved us, then his teaching wrongly begins to attribute credit for salvation to a creature and not to God himself. But this wrongfully exalts the creature rather than the creator, something scripture never allows us to do."

## WHAT IS THE TRINITY?

► “Within the one Being that is God, there exists eternally three coequal and coeternal persons, namely, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”

Source: White, J. R. (1998). *The Forgotten Trinity*. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House . p. 26.

## TWO BIBLICAL TRUTHS

- ▶ “Two biblical truths are evident in Scripture, the logical conclusion of which is the Trinity:
  1. There is one God.
  2. There are three distinct persons who are God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”

Source: Geisler, N. L. (1999). Trinity. In *Baker encyclopedia of Christian apologetics* (pp. 730-737). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

# THERE IS ONLY ONE GOD

- ▶ The O.T. And N.T. Affirm the Jewish *Shema* which is a command from Yahweh for His people to “*Listen!*” to the statement of God’s unity.
- ▶ “***Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!*** 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, NASB95)
- ▶ “One of the scribes came and heard them arguing, and recognizing that He had answered them well, asked Him, “What commandment is the foremost of all?” Jesus answered, “The foremost is, ‘***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 mind, and with all your strength.’ ‘The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.’” (Mark 12:28-31, NASB95)

### THE FATHER IS GOD

- ▶ “Throughout Scripture God is said to be a Father. Jesus taught his disciples to pray, “Our Father in heaven” (Matt. 6:9). God is not only “our heavenly Father” (Matt. 6:32) but the “Father of our spirits” (Heb. 12:9). As God, he is the object of worship. Jesus told the woman of Samaria, “Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks” (John 4:23). God is not only called “our Father” (Rom. 1:7) many times but also “the Father” (John 5:45; 6:27). He is also called “God and Father” (2 Cor. 1:3). Paul proclaimed that “there is but one God, the Father” (1 Cor. 8:6). Additionally, God is referred to as the “Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 15:6). Indeed, the Father and the Son are often related by these very names in the same verse (Matt. 11:27; 1 John 2:22).”

## THE SON (JESUS) IS ATTRIBUTED PROPERTIES OF GODHOOD

1. Mark 2:1-13: Jesus forgives sins, and vindicates His authority by healing the paralytic.
2. Revelation 5:11-14: Jesus is worshipped.
3. Colossians 2:13-18: Jesus is the creator and sustainer of all things.
4. Philippians 2:5-11: Jesus existed in the “form” of God, and every knee will bow and tongue confess His Lordship.

### THE GREAT “I AM”

- ▶ The “I AM” comes from the time that God gave His divine name to Moses in Exodus:
- ▶ “Then Moses said to God, “Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you.’ Now they may say to me, ‘What is His name?’ What shall I say to them?” God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM”; and He said, “Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’ ”” (Exodus 3:13-14, NASB95)

## JESUS IS THE GREAT “I AM”

- ▶ “And He was saying to them, “You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world. “Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.”” (John 8:23-24, NASB95)
  
- ▶ “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.” So the Jews said to Him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?” Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.” (John 8:56-58, NASB95)

## JESUS IS THE GREAT “I AM” (BEN’S TRANSLATION)

- ▶ “εὐθὺς δὲ ἔλαλησεν αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς λέγων· Θαρσεῖτε, ἔγώ εἰμι· μὴ φοβεῖσθε. Ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ αὐτῷ ὁ Πέτρος εἶπεν· Κύριε, εἰ σὺ εἶ, κέλευσόν με ἐλθεῖν πρὸς σὲ ἐπὶ τὰ ὕδατα· ὁ δὲ εἶπεν· Ἐλθέ. καὶ καταβὰς ἀπὸ τοῦ πλοίου Πέτρος περιεπάτησεν ἐπὶ τὰ ὕδατα καὶ ᾔλθεν πρὸς τὸν Ἰησοῦν.” (Matthew 14:27-29, SBLGNT)
- ▶ “And Immediately Jesus was speaking to them, saying “Be Courageous!, I AM. Do not fear! Peter answering Him, said “Lord, if YOU ARE, command me to come to you on the water. And He said “Come!” And going down from the boat, Peter walked on the water and came to Jesus.” (Matthew 14:27-29, Ben’s Translation)

## O. T. PASSAGES ABOUT YHWH APPLIED TO JESUS

- ▶ “A voice is calling, “**Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness; Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God.**” (Isaiah 40:3, NASB95)
  
- ▶ “The beginning of **the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.** As it is written in Isaiah the prophet: “Behold, I send My messenger ahead of You, Who will prepare Your way; The voice of one crying in the wilderness, ‘**Make ready the way of the Lord, Make His paths straight.**’” (Mark 1:1-3, NASB95)

## O. T. PASSAGES ABOUT YHWH APPLIED TO JESUS

- ▶ "Declare and set forth your case; Indeed, let them consult together. Who has announced this from of old? Who has long since declared it? **Is it not I, the Lord? And there is no other God besides Me, A righteous God and a Savior; There is none except Me.** "Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; For I am God, and there is no other. "I have sworn by Myself, The word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness And will not turn back, **That to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance.** "**They will say of Me, 'Only in the Lord are righteousness and strength.'** Men will come to Him, And all who were angry at Him will be put to shame." (Isaiah 45:21-24, NASB95)
- ▶ "For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that **at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**" (Philippians 2:9-11, NASB95)

## WHY ISN'T JESUS SIMPLY CALLED "GOD"?

- ▶ “So the Scriptures teach that God the Father is distinct from the Son and from the Spirit, and that the Father is God. He is the God of the Old Testament. In fact, this word “God” in the Greek, *ho theos* (literally meaning “the God” – the article *ho* is the masculine definite article) usually, in the New Testament, refers to God the Father. When the authors of the New Testament say something about God (*ho theos*) they are talking about the Father.”

Source: Craig, William Lane. “Doctrine of God: Trinity (Part 2).” *Reasonable Faith*, 20 July 2016, [www.reasonablefaith.org/podcasts/defenders-podcast-series-3/s3-doctrine-of-god-trinity/doctrine-of-god-trinity-part-2/](http://www.reasonablefaith.org/podcasts/defenders-podcast-series-3/s3-doctrine-of-god-trinity/doctrine-of-god-trinity-part-2/).

# WHY ISN'T JESUS SIMPLY CALLED "GOD"?

- ▶ "The Son is God. Immediately this raises a problem. If *ho theos* refers to the Father, then how can you say that Jesus is God without implying that he is the Father, which the New Testament writers did not want to do? They did not believe that the Father had become incarnate and died on the cross! Or that somehow the Father is no longer in heaven. So how could the New Testament writers affirm the deity of Christ without saying or implying that he is the Father? What you find is that the New Testament authors wrangled every way that they could to assert the deity of Christ without saying that he is God the Father."
- ▶ "...sometimes the authors in the New Testament simply lose all restraint, and they come right out and say, yes, Jesus Christ is *ho theos* – Jesus is God."

Source: Craig, William Lane. "Doctrine of God: Trinity (Part 2)." *Reasonable Faith*, 20 July 2016, [www.reasonablefaith.org/podcasts/defenders-podcast-series-3/s3-doctrine-of-god-trinity/doctrine-of-god-trinity-part-2/](http://www.reasonablefaith.org/podcasts/defenders-podcast-series-3/s3-doctrine-of-god-trinity/doctrine-of-god-trinity-part-2/).

(Second point is taken from Part 3 of the same series "Doctrine of the Trinity" by William Lane Craig.

### THE SON IS CALLED “GOD”

1. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.” (John 1:1-2, NASB95)
2. “No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.” (John 1:18, NASB95)
3. “whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.” (Romans 9:5, NASB95)
4. “But of the Son He says, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, And the righteous scepter is the scepter of His kingdom.” (Hebrews 1:8, NASB95)
5. “Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ:” (2 Peter 1:1, NASB95)

### THE SON IS CALLED “GOD”

6. “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the **appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed**, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you.” (Titus 2:11-15, NASB95)
7. “Then He said to Thomas, “Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing.” Thomas answered and said to Him, ‘**My Lord and my God!**’” (John 20:27-28, NASB95)

### THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GOD

- ▶ “The Holy Spirit is called “God” (Acts 5:3-4). He possesses the attributes of deity, such as omnipresence (cf. Ps. 139:7-12) and omniscience (1 Cor. 2:10, 11). He is associated with God the Father in creation (Gen. 1:2). He is involved with other members of the Godhead in the work of redemption (John 3:5-6; Rom. 8:9-17, 27-37; Titus 3:5-7). He is associated with other members of the Trinity under the “name” of God (Matt. 28:18-20). Finally, the Holy Spirit appears, along with the Father and Son, in New Testament benedictions (for example, 2 Cor. 13:14).”

Source: Geisler, N. L. (1999). Trinity. In *Baker encyclopedia of Christian apologetics* (pp. 730-737). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

## 3 DISTINCT PERSONS

- ▶ “That the three members of the Trinity are distinct persons is clear in that each is mentioned in distinction form [sic] the others. The Son prayed to the Father (cf. John 17). The Father spoke from heaven about the Son at his baptism (Matt. 3:15-17). Indeed, the Holy Spirit was present at the same time, revealing that they coexist. Further, the fact that they have separate titles (Father, Son, and Spirit) indicate they are not one person.”

Source: Geisler, N. L. (1999). Trinity. In *Baker encyclopedia of Christian apologetics* (pp. 730-737). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

## THINGS TO REMEMBER

1. God is not one person in 3 “forms” or “modes”—This is “Modalism” which was condemned as a heresy in the early church.
2. God is not 3 gods that are somehow one god.
3. All analogies fail to describe the Trinity.
4. When we say “Jesus is God, the Father is God, and the Spirit is God” we are making predicate statements, not identity statements.