

God in Three Persons

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[0 : 00] Welcome to Built on God's Word, the preaching and teaching ministry of Highland Park Baptist Church in Bartlesville, Oklahoma.! Pastor Mike Scrivani teaches on God in three persons.

I have two dogs at home. My dogs know me. They can distinguish me from other people. They know the sound of my voice. And they can sense the mood I'm in in the inflection of my voice. They understand some of the words that I speak to them. No. Come. Sit. Shake. Outside. Eat. Stop. My dogs know me, but they aren't able to know everything about me.

Their ability to comprehend all the words in my vocabulary, to understand my feelings, to understand why I feel the way that I do, and a whole bunch of other things, is limited. So, don't take this the wrong way, but the way my dogs are able to know me, but aren't really able to know everything about me, is similar to the way that human beings are able to know God, but aren't able to know everything about God.

Certainly, being created in God's image, we are able to know God, our Creator, better than a dog is able to know its owner.

[1 : 26] But God is an infinite being, and we are finite creatures. He is timeless, and we are time-bound. He is the Creator. We are the created.

There's a lot of things about God that we can more fully grasp, like His character, His salvation, His love for us, His will for our lives.

But when it comes to God's nature, His triunity, being one God in three persons, there are some things that we can know, but to completely understand and explain is beyond our ability to do or to fully comprehend.

You all know how much I admire Charles Spurgeon. One of my dogs is named after Spurgeon. Charles Spurgeon was brilliant. He said that when he preached, he had eight different trains of thought going at the same time, which means that while he was preaching, he was thinking about eight different things.

But even a brilliant, godly man like Charles Spurgeon acknowledged the impossibility of fully comprehending how God eternally exists as one in three persons.

[2 : 40] And this is what he said. We can never understand how Father, Son, and Holy Spirit can be three and yet one. For my part, I have long ago given up any desire to understand this great mystery, for I am perfectly satisfied that if I could understand it, it would not be true, because God, from the very nature of things, must be incomprehensible.

A.W. Tozer said, The doctrine of the Trinity is truth for the heart. The fact that it cannot be satisfactorily explained instead of being against it is in its favor.

Such a truth has to be revealed. No one could imagine it. The most difficult thing about the Christian concept of the Trinity is that there's no way to completely understand it or explain it.

God is infinitely greater than we are, therefore we should not expect to be able to fully understand Him. But we do trust the Bible, which teaches that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God.

At the same time, the Bible also teaches that there is only one God who exists in three persons.

Does everyone get that?

[4 : 00] Okay, let's close in prayer. God is an infinite being, but He desires that we, finite creatures created in His image, know Him.

And while we can't fully grasp and understand His eternal nature as one God in three persons, that doesn't mean that we shouldn't seek to know as much about God as we can.

After all, God, again, has given us His Word in which He's revealed Himself to us. He wants us to know Him, and He wants that knowledge of Him to delight us, to fill our hearts with joy and

gratitude.

Augustine said, seek not to understand that you may believe, but believe that you may understand. As Christians, we believe that God, as revealed in His Word, eternally exists as three persons, Father, Son, Holy Spirit, and each person is fully God, and there is one God.

That's the definition Grudem gives, and I think it's a good one in his systematic theology. His definition of the Trinity, God eternally exists as three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and each person is fully God, and there is one God.

[5 : 19] And so tonight, I'm going to walk us through Grudem's chapter on the Trinity, and we're going to look at how God has revealed His triune nature in His Word. Now, the question could be, why does this matter?

And simply stated, it matters because God matters. Do you want to know God? Jesus said in John 17, 3, this is eternal life, that they know you, the only God in Jesus Christ whom you have sent. To know God truly is to know Him savingly as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Trinity is central to the gospel that we are to proclaim.

As Jesus commanded, Matthew 28, 18 through 20, all authority in heaven and on earth has given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you, and behold, I am with you always to the end of the age.

John 3, 16 tells us that this is how we receive eternal life, by the Father giving His Son. Salvation is Trinitarian. The Father has an only, eternally begotten Son, Jesus.

[6 : 34] He's the monogenesis, the unique Son, in that He shares the Father's eternal nature. And in His love for sinners, the Father sends His Son for us.

The Son of God becomes a Son of Man so that the sons of men might become sons of God. And then the Father and Son send the Spirit to dwell in them, in Christians, so that we can experience new life as His adopted, born-again children.

The Trinity matters because there are many religions which claim our Scriptures as theirs, but who don't believe God as He's revealed Himself in His Word, as one God in three persons, and thus they teach a different gospel which can't save anyone.

And so we need to know as much as we can about the Trinity for ourselves and for others who are deceived by false gospels. It matters that we seek to understand the Trinity not just so that we have the right doctrine, but it matters for life.

Again, it matters for salvation. This is our God who in love gave us His Son, John 3.16, and who loves us and gave Himself for us, Galatians 2.20, who loves us and lives inside of us, Romans 5.5.

[7 : 52] So we'll follow, again, Grudem's outline and look to the Bible, the Word God's given to us to see how He's revealed Himself to us so that we can know and share the truth about who God is both for our joy and for the joy of others.

And so Grudem makes the point at the very beginning in his chapter that the doctrine of the Trinity is progressively revealed in Scripture. It's progressively revealed in Scripture.

The word Trinity is never found in the Bible, though the idea is presented in many places. In fact, it was Tertullian. Well, biblical scholars believe it was most likely Tertullian who lived 160 to 225 A.D. who was the first person to apply that word Trinity to God. The Latin word he used is trinitas, which means triad or threefold. And if you were here last week when Dr. Emerson gave his lesson, or that was two Sundays ago, you should be able to answer this question.

Where do we see the Trinity in Scripture? Where do we first see the Trinity in Scripture? I've heard it in Genesis at the very beginning, Genesis 1, 1 through 3.

[9 : 11] And if you weren't here when Dr. Emerson taught, I know I got to hear the recording. I'm sure we have it on our website. I'd encourage you to go listen to it. And if you were here to listen, I encourage you to go listen to it again.

But Genesis 1, 1 through 3, we see the Trinity at the very beginning of God's word. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

And God said, let there be light, and there was light. The Hebrew word for God here is Elohim. This is a plural noun which reveals, at the very beginning, the plural nature of God.

The Father speaks a command. The Son, who is the word of God, John 1, 1 through 3, executes the command, and the Holy Spirit brings it into reality and gives it life.

Genesis 1, 26 records the apex of God's creation with the creation of humanity. Genesis 1, 26 says, then God said, let us make man in our image after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.

[10:28] So here we hear God talking to us, let us make man, and then he says, let us make man in our image.

So the question is, who is us? And who is our? Grudem makes the observation that some people who deny the Trinity say that the us and the our is a sort of kingly speech, sort of like somebody who would refer to themselves in the third person.

But as Grudem points out, there's no example in the Hebrew Old Testament of any monarch using plural verbs and nouns for themselves.

Another suggestion is that God is speaking to angels, but angels did not partake in the creation of man, nor was man created in the image of angels.

Angels are ministering spirits, not agents of creation, and we've been in Hebrews, and we went all through that in Hebrews chapter 1. The best explanation is that there is a plurality of persons in God Himself.

[11:33] And as God continues to reveal Himself in Old Testament Scripture, we see examples where one person is called God or Lord and is distinguished from another person who is also said to be God.

For example, Psalm 45, 6-7. Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness.

You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness. Therefore, God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions. Here, the psalm passes beyond describing anything that could be true of an earthly king and calls the king God in verse 6, whose throne will last forever and ever.

But then, still speaking to the person called God, the author says that God, your God, has set you above your companions in verse 7. So, two separate persons are being called God here.

Grudem points that out. In the book of Hebrews, which, again, we've been studying, we see that the author applies this psalm, Psalm 45, to Jesus.

[12:46] Hebrews 1.8, but to the Son, he says, your throne, O God, is forever and ever. The scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom. Another example where we see multiple persons being called God in the Old Testament is Psalm 110.1.

The Lord says to my Lord, sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool. David was aware of a plurality of persons in one God as, again, it's the Holy Spirit who is inspiring him to write this word.

Yahweh, the first Lord there, the covenant name of God, says to Adonai, that's Lord or Master, a title that God often used of himself.

It's a divine title. We see that in Exodus 23.17 and Isaiah 1.24. So David's Lord, he's saying, is God himself. Who else could sit at God's right hand other than someone who is fully God?

And Jesus rightly understood this passage as referring to himself. And he mentions that, makes note of that in Matthew 22.41-46. Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, saying, what do you think about the Christ?

[14:01] Whose son is he? They said to him, the son of David. And he said to them, how is it then that David in the Spirit calls him Lord, saying, and let me back up right there, verse 43, he said to them, how is it then that David in the Spirit, so here we have our Lord making the point that our scriptures are inspired by God the Holy Spirit?

Calls him Lord, saying, the Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet. If then David calls him Lord, how is he his son? And no one was able to answer him a word, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

Another passage where there is a distinguishing between God's persons is in Hosea 1.7. That scripture says, but I will have mercy on the house of Judah and I will save them by the Lord their God.

I will not save them by bow or by sword or by war or by horses or by horsemen. So here, God is speaking to Hosea and he speaks of saving Judah by the Elohim, the plural noun for God, their Yahweh, the covenant name of God.

In Isaiah, God has been speaking and hear what he says in Isaiah 48.16. Draw near to me, hear this, from the beginning I have not spoken in secret.

[15:27] From the time it came to be, I have been there and now the Lord God has sent me and his spirit. This can only make sense in a Trinitarian context. God is speaking, another is speaking as God, for God, and is being sent with the spirit of God, with the divine message.

These are just some of the verses that express the nature of God as one in three persons, but another example we see in the Old Testament of the plurality of persons in God is the reference to the angel of the Lord.

Now that word angel means messenger. And Grudem points out that if this angel of the Lord is a messenger of the Lord, he is then distinct from the Lord himself, yet at some points the angel of the Lord is called God or the Lord.

For example, he finds Hagar in the wilderness and gives her a promise concerning her son Ishmael in Genesis 16, 7 through 12. The angel of the Lord stops Abraham from sacrificing Isaac in Genesis 22, 11 through 18.

He appears to Moses in flames of fire from within a bush in Exodus 3, 2. He delivers a message to wayward Israel in Judges 2, 1 through 4. He commissions Gideon and performs a miracle for him in Judges 6, 11 through 24.

[16:51] He brings a plague on Israel during David's time in 2 Samuel 24, 15 through 17. He appears in a vision to the prophet Zechariah in Zechariah 1, 11 through 13 and 3, 1 through 10.

In various passages in the Old Testament, the angel of the Lord speaks as God, identifies himself with God, and exercises the responsibilities of God.

In several of these appearances, those who saw the angel of the Lord feared for their lives because they said, we have seen or I have seen God.

Judges 13, 22 and 6, 22. Let's look at Judges 6, 22. Then Gideon perceived that this messenger was the angel of the Lord and Gideon said, Alas, O Lord God, for now I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face.

In Judges 13, the angel of the Lord appears to Manoah and his wife who is barren with the news that they will conceive a child and that child will be Samson.

[18:00] I want to read that passage. And Manoah said to the angel of the Lord, what is your name so that when your words come true we may honor you? And this is interesting again because when Jacob wrestles with God, he's wrestling with a physical manifestation of God, he asks for his name.

And again, as is the case here, it's not given. In verse 18, And the angel of the Lord said to him, Why do you ask my name seeing it is wonderful? So Manoah took the young goat with the grain offering and offered it on the rock to the Lord, to the one who works wonders.

And Manoah and his wife were watching. And when the flame went up toward heaven from the altar, the angel of the Lord went up in the flame of the altar. Now Manoah and his wife were watching and they fell on their faces to the ground.

The angel of the Lord appeared no more to Manoah and his wife than Manoah knew that he was the angel of the Lord. And Manoah said to his wife, We shall surely die for we have seen God.

So there are some instances where the angel of the Lord is a theophany or a Christophany appearance, an appearance of God in a physical form.

[19:14] The New Testament opens with the Son of God coming to earth. Thus it's no surprise that with the Son of God's coming we receive greater revelation about the Trinity in the New Testament.

We see the Trinity in the incarnation of our Lord with Gabriel's announcement to Mary that she will bear the Son of God. I want to read that passage to you.

Luke chapter 1 verses 26 through 35. In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph of the house of David.

And the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, Greetings, O favored one. The Lord is with you. But she was greatly troubled at the saying and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be.

And the angel said to her, Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever and ever and of his kingdom.

[20 : 23] There will be no end. And Mary said to the angel, How will this be since I am a virgin? So here we're seeing the Trinity at work in the beginning of Luke's gospel. And the angel answered her, The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.

Therefore, the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. In Matthew 3, 16 through 17, we see all three persons of the Trinity present at Jesus' baptism.

And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water and behold, the heavens were opened to him. And he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him.

And behold, a voice from heaven said, This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased. God the Father speaks from heaven. God the Son is being baptized and the Holy Spirit is descending from heaven to rest upon Jesus and empower his ministry.

We already looked at the Great Commission where Jesus commands his followers to make disciples and baptize them in the name of the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We have examples of Jesus declaring that he is God.

[21 : 28] In John 10, 30, Jesus said, I and the Father are one. The Jews who heard him make that statement knew he was claiming to be God as witnessed by their reaction. In John 10, 31, his Jewish opponents picked up stones to stone him when he asked them why they were attempting to stone him.

They said, for blasphemy because you, a mere man, claim to be God. Stoning was the penalty for blasphemy and the Jews plainly accused Jesus of claiming to be God.

Jesus made another statement about claiming to be God when he said, Very truly I tell you before Abraham was, I am in John 8, 58. The Jews upon hearing him say this clearly understood that he was claiming preexistence and more than that to be Yahweh, the great I am of Exodus 3, 14.

On this occasion too, they tried to stone him for blasphemy. The Gospel of John begins with the statement of Jesus' deity. In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God.

We see there is a distinguishing there between the two. And the Word was God. In verse 14, John identifies this Word. He says, The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us and we have seen His glory, the glory of the only, one and only Son who came from the Father full of grace and truth.

[22 : 54] John is affirming that the Word, Jesus, is God and He left heaven to come to earth in the form of a man to live with men and display the glory of the Father before them in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The disciples of Jesus distinctly heard Jesus declare His deity. After Jesus' resurrection, Thomas, the doubting disciple, finally understood Jesus' deity declaring Him to be my Lord and my God in John 20, 28.

If Jesus were not Lord and God, He would have corrected Thomas, but He didn't because Thomas was speaking the truth. After seeing Jesus walk on the water, His disciples fell down and worshipped Him in Matthew 14, 33.

When He appeared to them after the resurrection, they fell down again at His feet and worshipped Him in Matthew 28, 9. The disciples were well aware of the Mosaic Law's penalty for blasphemy, yet they worshipped Jesus as God and Jesus accepted their worship.

Jesus never rebuked them for worshipping Him and He accepted their worship as good and proper. Jesus' deity is recognized throughout the rest of the New Testament.

[24 : 14] The Apostle Paul eagerly awaited the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, Titus 2, 13, and encouraged us to do the same. Both Paul and John declared that Jesus created the universe.

Again, John 1, 3, Colossians 1, 16-17, yet Genesis 1, 1 clearly says that God created the heavens and the earth. This can only mean that Jesus is God. Even God the Father referred to Jesus as God.

Hebrews 1, 8, quoting Psalm 45, 6, about the Son, He says, Your throne, O God, will last forever and ever. Jesus told His disciples that the Holy Spirit, the Helper, was different from Himself.

The Father would send the Helper, He said, the Spirit of Truth, after He departed, after He ascended back into heaven. The Spirit would speak through the disciples about Jesus. We read that in John 14, 25-26, 15-26-27, and 16-7-15. All three persons Jesus mentions, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are God while being distinct from each other within the Trinity.

[25 : 26] One of the most convincing statements in the Bible about the Holy Spirit being God is found in Acts 5. When Ananias lied about the price of the piece of property that he sold, Peter said that Satan had filled Ananias' heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, Acts 5, 3, and concluded by saying that Ananias had lied to God in Acts 5, verse 4.

Peter reveals that the Holy Spirit is God. Lying to the Holy Spirit is lying to God. The early church understood that God is one in three persons.

I want to read some verses to you here. 2 Corinthians 13-14, The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

So we see all three persons, one God, three persons mentioned there. Ephesians 4, 4-6, There is one body and one spirit just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

1 Peter 1-2, According to the foreknowledge of God the Father and the sanctification of the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and for the sprinkling with His blood. Jude, verse 20 and 21, But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.

[26 : 53] So we see in the Bible, Old Testament to New Testament, that God is revealed as one in three persons, Father, Son, Holy Spirit.

Three statements then summarize the biblical teaching of the Trinity. First statement, God is three persons. God is three persons.

Grudem says, The fact that God is three persons means that the Father is not the Son. They are distinct persons. It also means that the Father is not the Holy Spirit, but that they are distinct persons, and it means that the Son is not the Holy Spirit.

Again, John's Gospel opens with the revelation that the Word was with God in the beginning as God. In Hebrews 7.25 and 1 John 2.1, we read about the distinct role Jesus has as our High Priest and our Intercessor before God the Father.

in John 14.26, Jesus promised the disciples that the Father would send the Holy Spirit in His name and would teach them all things. Each person of the Trinity had a unique role in the salvation of mankind.

[28 : 06] Ephesians 1 says that the Father chose us, the Son redeemed us, Ephesians 1.7, and the Holy Spirit sealed us, Ephesians 1.13. The Holy Spirit is a person unique from the Father or the Son.

The Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, John 15.26. The Father and the Son are also unique persons. When Jesus prayed to the Father, He was not praying to Himself.

Look at Luke 23.24. Each person of the Trinity shares the same divine nature, but they have distinct roles. Using the word person is the only way our language is able to describe this concept of who God is.

So, God exists in three persons. That's the first point, truth. Second truth or point is that each person is fully God.

God exists in three persons, Father, Son, Holy Spirit, and each person is fully God. I think and I hope that that point has been made pretty clear tonight.

[29 : 14] Obviously, the Father is God, the Holy Spirit is likewise revealed as fully divine, as is Jesus, the eternal word of God. Richard Mayhew said, each person of the Trinity possesses the entire simple, undivided essence of God.

This fact means that the three persons, though distinct from one another, are co-equal in every perfection of the divine essence. They are essentially co-equal, that is, with respect to the essence of God.

The three persons are equal to each other. Another way to say this is that the three persons are ontologically, with respect to their being or essence, equal to each other.

God exists in three persons, each person is fully God, and then the third point, truth, that we've seen from Scripture is that there is one God. Again, Grudem says, Scripture is abundantly clear that there is one and only one God.

The three different persons of the Trinity are not only in purpose and in agreement of what they think, but they are one in essence, one in their essential nature. In other words, God is only one being.

[30 : 23] There are not three gods, there is only one holy God. And God's oneness is also affirmed in the Bible, Deuteronomy 6, 4-5. This is a very famous passage, especially for the Jews.

Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your might. God's oneness is also affirmed in the New Testament, 1 Timothy 2, 5.

For there is one God and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. In 1 Corinthians 8, 6. Yet for us, there is one God, the Father from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

So these three truths serve as a sort of shield to guard us against heresies and to keep us from accepting false claims about the nature and being of God which promote false gospels.

Again, Mayhew says, the Trinity is a mystery in two senses. It is a mystery in the biblical sense in that it is a truth that was hidden until revealed.

[31 : 36] But it is also a mystery in that in its essence it is a supernatural ultimately beyond human comprehension. It is only partly intelligible to man because God has revealed it in Scripture and in Jesus Christ.

But it has no analogy in human experience and its core elements, three co-equal persons, each possessing the complete, simple, divine essence and each eternally relating to the other two without ontological subordination transcends man's reason.

Consequently, the doctrine must be accepted by faith based on how the Godhead is revealed in Scripture and it must be articulated in such a way that the essence of God is not divided and that the distinctions and the co-equality of being between the three persons are not compromised.

The doctrine of the Trinity needs to be both positive and negative theology. And by that he means positively we are affirming what the Bible teaches about the Trinity, what God has revealed about Himself in His Word, that He is one God in three persons and each person is fully God and God is one.

And then negatively by refuting any teaching that contradicts what the Bible teaches about the Trinity. So I'm going to draw you all a picture and this will help you because there's a lot I hope it will help you.

[33 : 04] There's a lot of just false teachings about the Trinity that are out there. There's a whole bunch and they've been around ever since Jesus came, right? And His first coming and His incarnation.

And so what I hope will help you is just drawing this picture so that you will not fall for that deception and that hopefully you can use this and more importantly use Scripture as you interact with people who teach something different about the nature and person of God.

Okay? So we have God, we have the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit. And from what we read in Scripture, the Father is God.

What we've read from Scripture is that the Son is God. what we've read from Scripture is that the Holy Spirit is God.

What we've also read from Scripture is that there are there's a distinguishing amongst God in three persons.

[34 : 37] So the Father is not the Son and the Son is not the Father. the Son is not the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit is not the Son.

The Father is not the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit is not the Father. So it kind of looks like a shield a little bit and so you use that as a shield whenever you hear all kinds of false teachings about the person of God, who He is and it also, I like to talk about the boundary markers that we have in Scripture.

Okay, we know the Bible clearly teaches this, the Bible clearly teaches this and we're going to stay right in between this safe zone of what the Bible says. And so, in the same way with the Trinity, when we're talking, when we're reading the Bible, when we're talking to other people about the Bible, when we're talking to Mormons or Jehovah's Witnesses or just anybody who has a wrong idea about what the Trinity is, this also serves as sort of like not just a shield for us but guardrails.

So, whenever we come to some of those passages where we're confused and we're coming against our own finite inability to fully comprehend our infinite God, our infinite Creator, these things help us to remember, okay, this is what the Bible teaches, that there is one God who exists in three persons.

The Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Father and vice versa for everything else but ultimately, the Holy Spirit is God, the Son is God, the Father is God as well.

[36 : 20] Crystal clear? Makes sense? As much as it can? Any questions? There will be some kind of belief, some kind of subordinate roles here that, you know, the Son's not really fully God, He's just kind of like the next level below that.

Well, that's not what the Bible teaches about the Son. There will be some conversations about the Holy Spirit almost being like this mystical sort of force like Star Wars or something like that.

Well, the Holy Spirit is revealed in God's Word as a person, as God. And so, having these scriptures are good for ourselves but also when we talk to people even within our churches.

I've been pastoring long enough that I've had different people come in and have had some different ideas about who God is and His nature and about Jesus and His nature and about the Holy Spirit.

I had one people say the Holy Spirit, you know, is just like a feeling. He's just like a good feeling.

He's a lot more than just a good feeling.

[37 : 35] He's God. And so, it's important just even for our own, for people in our church because there can just be a lot of things that they've heard from some teacher and it's not really what the Bible says.

And so, just having that, I mean, maybe even draw it in the back of your Bible on one of those empty white pages if that helps you out just to have that there so then when you're in Bible study or you're hearing somebody speak or you have a Mormon co-worker or a Jehovah's Witness shows up to your house and be like, hey, you know, and even if you fill in around here with all of the scriptures that say that the Son is God, the Father is God, the Holy Spirit is God, and then just ask questions.

Here's a question. I'll ask the question for those who didn't hear and then you make sure that I got what your question was. So, there's a sense within the evangelical church that the God of the Old Testament is not the same God as the God in the New Testament or that He's changed in some way.

So, yes, there is a lot of that going on. How would I respond to somebody like that? Again, I would just go to the Word and talk about the passage where God says that He doesn't change. And sometimes just take that thought and let's work it out.

You know, okay, so say God can change His character. Say God can change what He said in His Word. Well, then what do we do with these New Testament passages? Because if God can change, then what security or hope is there in the promises that He's given us because of His nature can change and His promises can change and if He is a God who is able to change, then, uh-oh, for all of us because hopefully, you know, God's continuing to wake up on His good side, I guess, because otherwise we're in a lot of trouble.

[39 : 36] I think whenever we're talking about God, you know, the Holy Spirit, even though they're distinct from one another, they're accomplishing the same work together. So when we're going back to the nature of God, it's not like the Holy Spirit is out here doing His own thing.

It's not like the Son is out here doing His own thing. It's separate from the other two is what I'm trying to say. I mean, obviously, Jesus was this God who died on the cross, but there's involvement in the Son and the Father.

It's not like there's any kind of rift or struggle or division within the Trinity or that there's a lack of communication about what's going on here and why this is happening the way that it's happening.

So yeah, I think you could say, you know, look, the Holy Spirit is not the Son, but certainly God has inspired His Word because the Holy Spirit is God.

Jesus is God. And this is where we're kind of coming into some of the things where our language begins to be insufficient for what I think our minds can comprehend, but then even what our minds can comprehend about God, it starts to make you reach the end of yourself and your inability to fully communicate the truth that all of what God is, who He is, with our finite minds and our words that are insufficient to describe Him.

[40 : 57] I think I've also seen more in the Evangelical Church, did Dr. Emerson talk about this? It's called ESS, the Eternal Subordination of the Son. He'd be really good, like, look up Dr. Emerson,

look up ESS, and so there's also this thought that the Son exists in this eternally subordinate role to the Father, which, in essence, makes Him a lower, lesser, almost like another God.

And so that had been kind of going around for a while. I think that Dr. Emerson and others have done good to write about, let's get back to what the Bible says, because we're starting to go down a route where we're treating Jesus as if He's another God or just like a really high man who's not fully God or is less than fully God.

We've got to go back to what the Bible says where Jesus is presented as being fully divine. Any questions now? Yes.

So the Old Testament promises Christ reveals Him until the New Testament when He comes. And I would say too, well, does Jesus make that kind of separation?

And I know that the New Testament wasn't in existence at that point, but Jesus treats the Old Testament Scriptures as being fully inspired, fully given by God.

[42 : 24] And so we can't divorce ourselves or separate ourselves from the Old Testament. We'd be foolish to do that. Great point.

So Paul makes a point that the road of Emmaus, if there's one place where I could go back and be and see for myself, it would be as Jesus walks with those two followers of His and they don't know it's Him, but He opens their mind to understand the Scriptures, which are the Old Testament Scriptures, and showing them how everything in them ultimately points to His coming and what He would achieve for us and what He did achieve for us through His first coming.

and we look forward to His second coming as well. So, yeah, Jesus treated the Old Testament Scriptures as being fully inspired and God-given and so should we.

And those are good passages to go to and to use whenever you come across somebody in the church who treats the Old Testament as being replaced by the New.

Now, I would say that it is important that we read the Old Testament in light of the New Testament, right? Because it's through the New Testament that we're able to better understand the Old Testament and the types and the foreshadowings and the promises made and that we're fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

[43 : 45] And so you've probably seen that picture where it's a bunch of colored lines, the Bible's open, you see all those. And that's just a visual of all the connections between the Old Testament and the New Testament. So the Old Testament is important, but it's important that when we read the Old Testament, we're reading it in light of the New Testament and Jesus' coming and his fulfillment of those passages which prophesied his first end and I trust also his second coming.

Jeff, did you have a question? So Jeff said that both at the end, the road of Emmaus, and then at the beginning of Jesus' ministries, he said that I came not to abolish the law and the prophets, but to fulfill them.

So yeah, all good passages to have. And whenever we're having these kinds of conversations with people, the Bible needs to be what is affirmed and this is ultimately where we're going to go.

Right? So if the Bible says it, this is what we're going to believe and if you're believing something or if you're teaching something that contradicts Scripture, then you're wrong and you should repent of that and you should be humble enough to admit that, wow, I had that wrong.

And if you believe that the Bible is God's Word, then you'll admit where you're wrong and you'll change what needs changing. In one of my theology classes, our professor would call them ditties.

[45 : 16] And so it was just a paper. It was a paper and it would be some kind of theological, he'd ask a question. He'd just kind of post it and you had to come with an answer and then you would have to get up and share it with the class and he would, in a Christ-like way, destroy it.

And so one of the things he had us do was to use some of those illustrations of the Trinity and then explain why they're inadequate.

Well, let me explain some of them and then I'll kind of give my viewpoint on it as well. Anybody heard the water? One that Everett mentioned, you know, water can be a gas, it can be in a liquid, it can be in a solid.

So we have, you know, one element that can exist in three different states. There you go. I did not do well in science. An apple.

Anybody heard of the apple? You have the skin of the apple, you have the inside of the apple or the part you eat and then you have the core. So you have three parts that make up the apple. The apple is one. A three-leaf clover, three leaves, obviously connected by one stem.

[46 : 26] So I think those can actually be helpful. I think when you're talking, especially to a young person, I know for me, the water one was helpful. That's the one who stuck with me.

I can even kind of even see in my mind where I was in church when I was a young boy and it wasn't presented as this is exactly what the Trinity is like. It was just, hey, think of water and how it is one element but it can be gas and it can be liquid and it can be a solid.

It can be an ice cube and for me, I was like, oh, that helps me better understand the Trinity. And so I think, I believe, it's good to share those.

The problem with that is you could kind of get into modalism where you take water, well, it can be gas, but while it's gas, it can also be liquid and a solid.

And if it's a liquid, it can also be a gas and a solid at the same time. And I shared something like this in youth group not that long ago, our youth group, and there was a girl who came up after me.

[47 : 35] She was pretty intelligent. She said, well, actually now they've been able to make water all three at one time and I just said, I don't, okay, I trust that, you know, maybe you need to stop watching YouTube or wherever you got that from.

The three-leaf clover can be helpful. I think the apple, it can be helpful, but they're limited because those three things can't be the other thing.

And so that's where you get into something called modalism. Has anybody heard of modalism before, which basically says, yeah, we believe that God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but while he's the Son, he's not the Father, he's not the Holy Spirit and vice versa with everything else, which again, the Bible clearly contradicts because we see all three persons of the Trinity together in different things.

Yeah, the baptism of Jesus, the incarnation of Jesus, the very beginning when God created the heavens and the earth. So we see all three in the same place at once.

So modalism, and then we'll get into different beliefs, Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses about Jesus not being God, but being like a lesser God, a lower deity.

[48 : 50] Mormons believe Jesus and Satan are brothers and also this thought about God who existed as a man but became divine and other things like this. It's like, you guys are getting this from the devil.

You're not getting it from God's Word. And so I think what the danger is is sometimes people read the Bible and maybe in their pride they want to be able to rationalize the Trinity in a way where they can wrap their mind around it.

But when you're doing that, ultimately you're rejecting how God has revealed himself in his Word and you're going to end up preaching a different gospel that doesn't save. And so that's why it's important that we have this shield as a reminder when we come to those texts in the Bible and we have these conversations.

Okay, this is how God has revealed himself in his Word and anything that would contradict this revelation is wrong. And so it keeps us in the boundaries.

It keeps us safe as far as our doctrine and what we teach and what we preach. Any other questions? Do you guys get that?

[49 : 57] So just being careful about elevating one member of the Trinity above the others as if that member is more important or maybe even more divine than the others.

Ultimately, what matters is that we know the Bible. We know how God has revealed himself in the Bible and in knowing how God has revealed himself and what God has said, that's where we're going to stay.

And anything that contradicts how God's revealed himself in his Word is something that we need to reject, we need to confront, and we need to challenge.

And so I would hope for myself and for all of us, this is not a secondary issue. This is a primary truth of importance. This is a core to all of our doctrines.

This is a core to what we believe about God. So don't hear me say anything differently about the Trinity here. But even when it comes to our other conversations about things that are maybe more secondary to our salvation, we ought to be able to say, hey, look, let's go to God's Word.

[51 : 04] This is what it says. Let's understand what it means. And if what I'm believing or thinking is not what's in Scripture, then I'm wrong. We ought to be able to have those conversations.

So I told you that one of my dog's names is Spurgeon. The other one is Mac, which is short for MacArthur, who only when he really gets in trouble do we call him MacArthur.

I'm just joking. We don't call him MacArthur. I think I wanted to call him MacArthur. My kids wanted to call him, and Danny wanted to call him Mac. So it's Mac, but really in my mind it's MacArthur. And if we had a third dog, I would want to name it Spruel.

I don't know. That doesn't really sound like a good name for a dog. But John MacArthur and R.C. Spruel were great friends and preached the same gospel, but they had different views on baptism and communion and different things like that.

And it was R.C. Spruel I heard say it, and I've shared this story before because it's just important for me whenever I have conversations with other people as well. Like, these are brothers, these are sisters in Christ.

[52 : 07] R.C. Spruel said, I know that on whatever one of these secondary doctrinal issues is, he said, I can take John MacArthur to the mat. And I'm sure John MacArthur could say the same thing, meaning we can go, we'll go to the mat and we're going to wrestle with this text and with each other.

But, he said, I can take John MacArthur to the mat and if I can show him from God's word that whatever position I have is biblically true, doctrinally correct, John MacArthur will, and I can't remember the exact words the way he phrased it, but basically change his mind.

And I would say that certainly the same thing is true when it came to R.C. Spruel except for the issues that they remained opposite of one another on. But, I hope you get my point, is that it's good for us to have these conversations.

It's good for us to do this in a healthy way where we're sharpening one another. It's good to talk about God's word and it's good for us, it's commanded by us to preach the good news of the gospel which is Trinitarian, salvation is Trinitarian, this is a core truth to what we believe as Christians and if we get this wrong, we're going to get everything else wrong.

Right? This is foundational and if there's something, there's a crack in the foundation or something is lopsided in the foundation, the rest of the house is going to be bad and it's going to have cracks and it's going to eventually come apart.

[53 : 31] So, I'll pray. Lord, thank you again for this night and for your word as we've discussed how you've revealed yourself in the word that you've given to us as God who is one, but God who is one in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

And Lord, help us to be humble in our approach to you just in everything. Lord, you are our creator. Lord, you are our savior. And so, Father, I pray that when we come to your word and we have these conversations about you that we would be fearful and careful but also bold in sharing the truth of who you are as you again revealed yourself to us in your word.

And so, Lord, we know that there are a lot of people in this world who claim your word for themselves but yet believe things about you that are false and are deceiving many.

And so, Lord, help us to know not just so that we can know you better and delight in you more but help us to know so that we're better able to share with those who have been deceived in the hopes that they will know you truly.

And in knowing you truly, they'll know you savingly as well. Lord, we thank you for giving us the ability to comprehend you and the ways that you have given us the ability to comprehend.

[54 : 57] And, Father, we look forward to that day when we are able to more fully comprehend who you are and what you've done when we are in your presence, in your kingdom. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. To learn more, visit us in person or see the website at highlandparkbaptist.net.