

God In Three Persons Blessed Trinity

Trinity Sunday is June 12. It is celebrated the Sunday following Pentecost Sunday, which commemorates when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the church to empower followers of Christ to be the living Body of Christ. Perhaps no doctrine of the Christian Church is more obscure in the minds of churchgoers than is the doctrine of the Trinity. The early church councils of the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. debated long and hard before they arrived at a satisfactory statement of the doctrine, and still today, persons misunderstand or distort the teaching. The doctrine of the Trinity took shape out of the testimony of the scriptures, beginning with their witness to Jesus Christ. Most of the writers of the New Testament were originally Jews who believed in one God. But when the apostles and disciples encountered Jesus of Nazareth and witnessed his life, death, and resurrection, they became convinced that he was fully Immanuel, God with them, the Person of God incarnated in human flesh. After Christ's resurrection and ascension, the apostles and disciples also found that God in Christ continued fully to be with them in the Person of the Holy Spirit, as Christ has promised. Thus, the one God of the Old Testament was fully present in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. He was One, in three Persons. Not only the Father, but also the Son and the Holy Spirit, are wholly divine, the Son also having been fully human and incarnated in human flesh in Jesus of Nazareth. The Son, who is with us, is God. The Holy Spirit who comes to us is God. They are not lesser deities than the Father, and to all of them, Father, Son, or Holy Spirit, we pray. Our belief in the Trinity gives deeper meaning and expression of our understanding of the unity which exists in the one living and true God.

The Doctrine of the Trinity is not the belief in three different Gods. In fact, the doctrine of the Trinity was set forth in an effort to preserve the oneness of God. It was not developed by theologians living aloof from the world in some ivory tower, but it came out of the day-by-day experience of those first Christians. As good Jews, they believed in One God. But they had experienced the presence of God visiting them in the person of Jesus, who they called the Christ, God's anointed One, the Revealer of God. And when Jesus was no longer with them in the flesh, they did not feel that God had left them. Indeed, Jesus Himself had told them: "It is to your advantage that I go away so that I may send the Counselor to you, the Holy Spirit. I have been WITH you. He shall be IN you." (John 14:16) Jesus Christ, we believe, is the supreme revelation of God. But, as a man, Jesus could only be in one place at one time. And that place was Palestine, a little country some 50 x 150 miles, smaller than Massachusetts or New Jersey. But, Christians believe, the Holy Spirit universalized Jesus. Through the Holy Spirit Jesus Christ is more alive to millions more people today than He ever was in the first three decades of the first century. Of course, the Trinity is a deep mystery. Theologians have spent lifetimes straining their brains trying to understand it. They have even tried to peer into the inner workings of God's mind and describe the family relationships in heaven between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I have never found those efforts particularly edifying. That is sort of like trying to psychoanalyze God! I don't think that the doctrine of the Trinity is an attempt to describe what God is in Himself. Rather, I believe that it is an attempt by Christians to describe the manifold ways in which God manifests Himself to us here on earth: as Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer.

The doctrine of the Trinity describes God's continual efforts to get closer and closer to us. Not content to be above us, God came to walk beside us. Not even content with that, God now dwells within us. That is what we mean when we say, I believe in God the Father (Creator), God the Son (Savior) and God the Holy Spirit (Sustainer). God has created us; God has redeemed us, and God will sustain us through His Holy Spirit. So, Praise the Father, Praise the Son, Praise the Spirit, Three in One, Clothed in power and in grace The name above all other names! I want to encourage you to pray this daily prayer by the late John Stott, "Good morning heavenly Father, good morning, Lord Jesus, good morning Holy Spirit. Heavenly Father, I worship you as the creator and sustainer of the universe. Lord Jesus, I worship you, Savior, and Lord of the world. Holy Spirit, I worship you, sanctifier of the people of God. Glory to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. Heavenly Father, I pray that I may live this day in your presence and please you more and more. Lord Jesus, I pray that this day I may take up my cross and follow you. Holy Spirit, I pray that this day you will fill me with yourself and cause your fruit to ripen in my life: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, three persons in one God, have mercy upon me. Amen."