

# The Triune God

## Mystery and Limits

We are three dimensional beings attempting to understand a infinitely dimensional God.

**Illustration: Flat Stanley and the Rubik's Cube**

## Three Essential Statements

God is One

God is in Three Distinct Persons

Each person is fully God

**Heresies throughout history have attempted to deal with the complexity of the Trinity by taking away one of these three essentials.**

## God is One

### Old Testament

*“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” Gen 1:1*

*“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.” Deut. 6:4*

*“I am the Lord, and there is no other, besides me there is no God...”  
Isaiah 45:5*

### Sources:

*Systematic Theology* by Wayne Grudem

*Bible Doctrine: Essential Teachings of the Christian Faith* by Wayne Grudem edited by Jeff Purswell

*Delighting in the Trinity: An Introduction to the Christian Faith* by Michael Reeves

*“remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God and there is none like me,” Isaiah 46:9*

## **New Testament**

“yet for us there is one God, the Father from whom all things are and for whom we exist...” 1 Cor. 8:6

“And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God...” John 17:3

“For there is one God...” 1 Tim 2:5

## **God is Three Distinct Persons**

*Modalism* claims the solution to the mystery of God’s nature is that He “reveals” himself in three “modes” or forms. (Oneness Pentecostals hold to a modalist view of God.) For example an illustration might be the various roles of a man (Father, Son, Husband ect).

Deny 3 Distinct Persons in the Trinity?

1. Deny God’s attribute of Independence – In this view, He is dependent on his creation for his attribute of love.
2. Deny the clear teaching of Matthew 3 where we encounter Father, Son and Holy Spirit in one scene. (See also Matthew 17:1-8, the transfiguration)

...the heavens opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, coming to rest on Him and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my son, with whom I am well pleased.” Matt. 3:16b-17

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3. Deny the prayers of Jesus on behalf of his disciples (Jn 17) and the prayer of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8) have any real meaning.
4. Deny the atonement. Father, Son and Spirit all have a role in the atonement.

The Father – Sends and Judges

The Son – Obeys, taking on the form of a servant unto death

The Spirit – Empowers the Son to arrive at the cross in impeccable righteousness.

### Hints in the Old Testament

*“Let us make man in our image after our likeness...” Gen. 1:26*

*“Behold, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil...” Gen. 3:22*

*“Come, let us go down there and confuse their language...” Gen. 11:7*

*“...Therefore, God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions...” Ps. 45:7 (Quoted in Hebrews 1:8)*

*“The Lord says to my Lord, sit at my right hand..” Ps 110:1 (Quoted by Jesus in Matthew 22:41-46)*

### Each of the Persons is Fully God

A common heresy in the early church that has also endured to present time is Arianism. Arians deny the deity of Jesus claiming that He was created first by God. Jehovah's Witnesses hold to this view.

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## Revealed in the Gospels

“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

“All things came into being by Him and apart from him nothing came into being that has come into being.” John 1:3

## Sharing with a Jehovah’s Witness


“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.**”

“And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, **and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.**”

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“...baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit...”  
Matt. 28:18

Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.” Jn 14:8-9

And I will ask my Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells within you and will be in you. Jn 14:16-17

### Revealed in the Epistles

“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.” 1 Cor 12:4-6

But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back *some* of the price of the land? While it remained *unsold*, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.” Acts 5:3-4

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? 1 Cor. 6:19

### Arianism

Arius was an elder in Alexandria (died A.D. 336). Condemned as a heretic at Council of Nicea in 325.

Arius taught:

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Jesus (and the Holy Spirit) were created by God and therefore not divine in nature

Colossians 1:15 - refers to Jesus as “first-born”

Passages referring to Jesus as “only-begotten” (i.e. Jn 1:4 and Jn 3:16)

## Answering Arianism

### *“First-Born”*

The emphasis in Colossians 1:15 is not that Jesus was created. The word firstborn here means “first-born status” or “birthright”.

Instead of “Firstborn *of* all creation, the NIV translates this as “firstborn over all creation...”

In Matthew 28, at the commissioning of the Apostles, Jesus declares to them that all authority in Heaven and on Earth has been given to Him.

### *Only-Begotten Son*

The Greek word *monogenes* (mon-og-en-ace) used in Jn. 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 Jn 4:19. It was believed that monogenes was a word from *mono* meaning “only” and *gennao* meaning “bear” or “beget”

Current language study has actually determined that monogenes is connected to the word *genos* meaning “class” or “kind”. “One-of-a-kind Son

*“By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his **only** son”.*

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*Heb 11:17*

## Two Important Councils

Nicea in A.D. 325 – Athanasius

Constantinople in A.D. 381

## Nicene Creed

In Nicea the Deity of the Son was affirmed and Arianism was defeated.

### Homoousios vs Homoiousios

Homo = \_\_\_\_\_

Homoi = \_\_\_\_\_

Ousia = \_\_\_\_\_

*We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible. And in on Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, the only-begotten; that is of the essence of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, True God of True God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father...*

**Later in Constantinople (381)** the article regarding the Holy Spirit was addressed.

*And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father (and the Son added in 589) who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets.*

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**What are some common ways you've heard people attempt to explain the Triune nature of God?**

**What are the strengths and weakness of those descriptions?**

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