

What is the Trinity and What Do Christians Believe?

THE TRINITY

- What is the Trinity?
- Answers to Misunderstandings
- What Early Christians Said About the Trinity



What Christians Believe About the Trinity



What Christians Believe About the Trinity

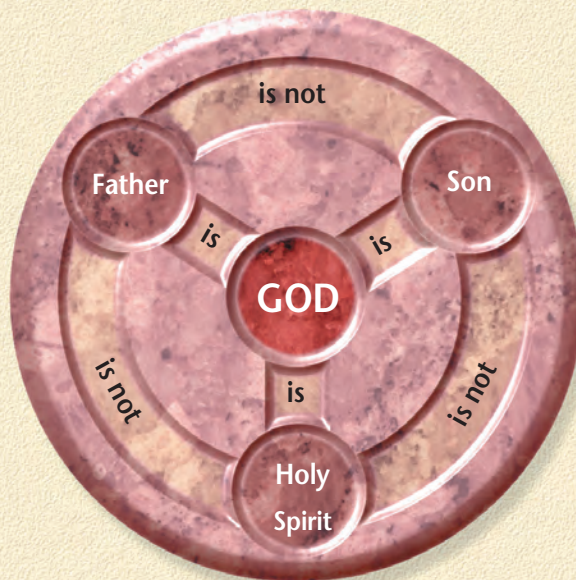
In the simplest of terms, Christians believe:

There is only one God, and this one God exists as one essence in three Persons.

The three Persons are God the Father

God the Son (Jesus Christ)

God the Holy Spirit (also called the Holy Ghost)



Early Christians used this diagram to explain the Trinity. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all God, but they are not three names for the same Person.

The Persons are distinct: The Father is not the Son.

The Son is not the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is not the Father.

The Trinity and the Bible

God is one absolutely perfect divine Being in three Persons. His *being* is what God is, in relation to the universe he created. The three are called Persons because they relate to one another in personal ways.

When Christians talk about believing in one God in three Persons (the Trinity), they do NOT mean:

- 1 God in 3 Gods, or
- 3 Persons in 1 Person, or
- 3 Persons in 3 Gods, or
- 1 Person in 3 Gods

Rather, they mean:

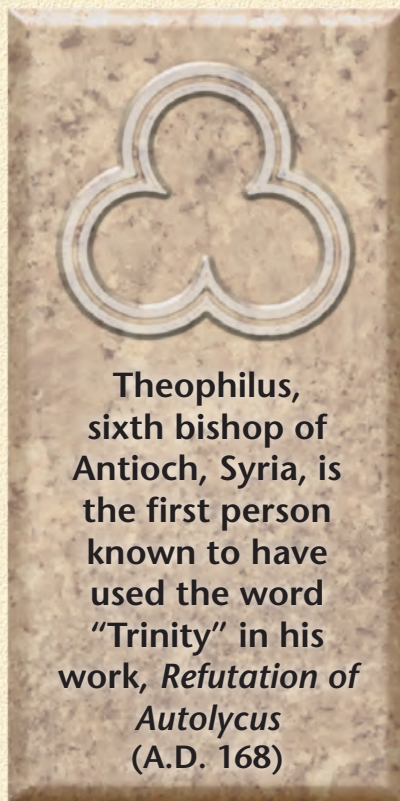
- 1 God in 3 Persons

Therefore,

The Father is God—the first Person of the Trinity.

The Son is God—the second Person of the Trinity.

The Holy Spirit is God—the third Person of the Trinity. (The title “Holy Ghost” is an older English expression for “Holy Spirit.” Each is an acceptable translation of the phrase in the Bible.)



**Theophilus,
sixth bishop of
Antioch, Syria, is
the first person
known to have
used the word
“Trinity” in his
work, *Refutation of
Autolytus*
(A.D. 168)**

Why do Christians Believe in the Trinity?

The Bible clearly teaches that there is only one God, yet all three Persons are called God.

There is only one God:

- *Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD. (Deuteronomy 6:4)*
- *Before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. (Isaiah 43:10; 44:6; 8; 45:5a)*

The Father is God:

- *Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 1:3; 8:6; Ephesians 4:4-6)*

The Son is God:

- *The Word was God. (John 1:1-5, 14) Jesus is identified as “the Word.”*
- *I and the Father are one. (John 10:30-33)*
- *Jesus’ disciple Thomas addressed Jesus as “My Lord and my God.” (John 20:28)*

Jesus did not tell Thomas he was mistaken; instead Jesus accepted these titles. Other people in Scripture, notably Paul and Barnabas (Acts 14), refused to accept worship as gods.

The Trinity and the Bible

- *But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. (Hebrews 1:6-8)*
- *Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:9-11)*

Paul, the writer of Philippians, is saying about Jesus what Isaiah 45:23 says about the LORD, and then Paul concludes that Jesus is LORD, that is, the same LORD God of the Old Testament.

See these passages about Jesus' deity: Isaiah 7:14; Isaiah 9:6; John 1:1; John 1:18; John 8:58, 59; John 10:30; Acts 20:28; Romans 9:5 & 10:9-13; Colossians 1:15, 16; Colossians 2:9; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:3, 8; 2 Peter 1:1; 1 John 5:20.

The Holy Spirit is God:

- *But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost? ...Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. (Acts 5:3-4)*

This verse equates the Holy Spirit (Holy Ghost) with God.

- *Now the Lord is that Spirit. (2 Corinthians 3:17)*

"The Lord" here refers to "the LORD" in the Old Testament verse (Exodus 34:34) Paul had just quoted in the previous verse (2 Corinthians 3:16).

More than 60 Bible passages mention the three Persons together:

- Matthew 3:16, 17 "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."
- Matthew 28:19 "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."
- 2 Corinthians 13:14, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all."
- Ephesians 4:4-6 "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."
- Titus 3:4-6 "But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour . . ."

See also John 3:34, 35; John 14:26; John 15:26; John 16:13-15; Romans 14:17, 18; Romans 15:13-17; Romans 15:30; 1 Corinthians 6:11, 17-19; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6; 2 Corinthians 1:21, 22; 2 Corinthians 3:4-6; Galatians 2:21-3:2; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 2:18; Ephesians 3:11-17; Ephesians 5:18-20; Colossians 1:6-8; 1 Thessalonians 1:1-5; 1 Thessalonians 4:2, 8; 1 Thessalonians 5:18, 19; 2 Thessalonians 3:5; Hebrews 9:14; 1 Peter 1:2; 1 John 3:23, 24; 1 John 4:13, 14; and Jude 20, 21.