



Q. What is the Trinity? Do Christians worship three gods?

Josh McDowell Ministry

A. One of the most commonly misunderstood ideas in the Bible concerns the teaching about the Trinity. Although Christians say that they believe in one God, they are constantly accused of polytheism (worshipping at least three gods).

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The Scriptures do not teach that there are three gods; neither do they teach that God wears three different masks while acting out the drama of history. What the Bible does teach is stated in the doctrine of the Trinity: There is one God who has revealed Himself in three persons — the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit — and these three persons are the one God.

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Although this is difficult to comprehend, it is nevertheless what the Bible tells us, and it is the closest the finite mind can come to explaining the infinite mystery of the infinite God when considering the biblical statements about God's being.

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The Bible teaches that there is one God and only one God: "Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!" (Deuteronomy 6:4, NASB). "There is one God" (1 Timothy 2:5, KJV). "Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: 'I am the first and I am the last, and there is no God beside Me'" (Isaiah 44:6, NASB).

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However, even though God is one in His essential being or nature, He is also three persons. "Let us make man in our image" (Genesis 1:26, KJV). "God said, 'Behold, the man has become like one of us'" (Genesis 3:22, RSV).

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God's plural personality is alluded to here, for He could not be talking to angels in these instances, because angels could not and did not help God create. The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ, not the angels, created all things (John 1:3; Colossians 1:15; Hebrews 1:2).

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In addition to speaking of God as one, and alluding to a plurality of God's personality, the Scriptures are quite specific as to naming God in terms of three persons. There is a person whom the Bible calls the Father, and the Father is designated as God the Father (Galatians 1:1).

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The Bible talks about a person named Jesus, or the Son, or the Word, also called God. "The Word was God ..." (John 1:1, KJV). Jesus was "also calling God His own Father, making himself equal with God" (John 5:18, NASB).

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There is a third person mentioned in the Scriptures called the Holy Spirit, and this person — different from the Father and the Son — is also called God ("Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit? ... You have not lied to men, but to God" (Acts 5:3, 4, RSV).

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The facts of the biblical teaching are these: There is one God. This one God has a plural personality. This one God is called the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit — all distinct personalities, all designated God. We are therefore led to the conclusion that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are one God — the Trinity.

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Excerpts taken from *Answers to Tough Questions Skeptics Ask About the Christian Faith* Josh McDowell and Don Stewart. Living Books, 1980.

Scripture quotations are taken from the New American Standard Bible unless otherwise indicated.

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