



Living the Christian Life Bible Study

Lesson 7b (NIV)

Understanding God (Part 2 of 2)

Student's Name _____ **Unit** _____

Instructor _____

Comments _____

2.0 The Tri-unity of God (cont'd)

2.3 The Threeness of God

2.3.1 In the New Testament

There are many places in the New Testament where all three members of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are seen together.

First, at the baptism of Jesus, Luke 3:21-22, *When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened²² and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."* Here we see Jesus referred to by God as His Son, we see the Holy Spirit in a physical manifestation, and we hear God the Father speaking from heaven.

Jesus often spoke of the Father and the Spirit, Luke 11:13 *If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"*

After His resurrection, as Jesus commissions his disciples to proclaim the gospel to all the world, He tells them, Matthew 28:19, *Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.* Notice that baptism is in the name (singular) of all three persons of the Trinity.

2.3.2 In the Old Testament

While the doctrine of the Trinity is never stated as clearly in the Old Testament, there are a few interesting hints of the Tri-unity of God in the Old Testament. In the creation narrative in Genesis 1:26, God speaks of Himself in the plural, *Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."*

Similarly, in Genesis 3:22, when God put Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden, *And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever."*

So the Bible clearly teaches that God may be manifest in _____ different persons.

2.4 Conclusion

We have seen that the clear teaching of the Bible is that there is only one true and living God in the universe, and His name is Jehovah. Yet we have seen that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all spoken of as God, individually and simultaneously. We hold that while these truths may seem different from each other, they are not contradictory. They are simply an expression of the greatness of our God and serve to increase our awe and wonder of Him. What we may not fully comprehend, we can apprehend. To the glory of God alone.

1.0 God's Relational Qualities

The book of Psalms is both the hymn book and prayer book of ancient Israel. While about half of the Psalms were written by King David, the others were written by a variety of people from the time of Moses on through the end of the Old Testament era. Each individual chapter, or Psalm, is a unique prayer by a real person expressing his feelings about life and about God, and about their relationship. Each Psalm, as with all of the Bible, was also inspired by the Holy Spirit. And while it is true that every book in the Bible reflects something of God's character, the Psalms give us the broadest picture of God, written in the most human of terms. We will, therefore, use this book as our primary source for understanding God's relational qualities.

Read the following verses from the Book of Psalms, and identify some characteristic of God that you see.

Psalm 77:13

What does it mean to say that God is holy? Holiness first of all is to be morally perfect. God cannot sin, He cannot think of sinning, He cannot accept evil in any form, and He will never tempt man to sin. Another aspect of holiness is that of separation. Because God is morally perfect, He cannot fellowship with sinful man. But after we receive His Son, Jesus Christ, as our Lord and Savior, He declares us to be righteous and holy, and we are welcomed into His presence.

Psalm 11:4-7

To say that God is righteous is to say that He will always do what is right and that He is the true essence of righteousness. It also means that His moral law as given to man is an expression of His righteousness. To say that God is just is also to say that He is the perfect judge, that all His judgements will be perfect according to His righteous character. Every sin must be punished in perfect fairness, either by Christ on the cross, or by the sinner in eternal condemnation.

Psalm 47:7-9

To say that God is sovereign is to say that He rules over everything that happens in the world. Proverbs 21:1 says, *The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD; he directs it like a watercourse wherever he pleases.* In addition to controlling the nations of the world, He also has complete control over nature.

1.0 God's Relational Qualities (cont'd)

Psalm 89:1-2 _____

The whole Bible is full of God's love, a love that is truly unconditional. He has loved us each from before we were born. In the Old Testament we see His love in continuing to forgive and restore Israel, in spite of their sin and failure. In the New Testament we see Him giving His Son to die that we might be able to call Him our Father, and live in the light of His love.

Psalm 51:1-4 _____

Because of His great love, God is merciful. Mercy is when God withholds from us the punishment we so justly deserve. In Psalm 51 David is pleading for God's mercy after committing adultery and murder.

These are but a few of the relational characteristics of God; you will see many more as you continue to read the Bible. But these few will give you a start at understanding God's character.

It is amazing and wonderful that God, who is eternally self-existent and the all-powerful creator of the universe, also desires to have a relationship with people that he created in His own image. And that because of His love and mercy, when those people He created turned against Him in sin, as we all have, He continued to love us. Furthermore, because His holiness prevented a relationship with sinners, He sacrificed His only Son so we could be restored to relationship with Him, and call Him our Father. Let us truly worship Him with reverence and awe.

2.0 The Tri-unity of God

2.1 Introduction

The Bible clearly states in many places that there is only one true and living God, His name is Jehovah and that He is the creator of all that exists in the universe. However, the Bible is equally clear that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is fully divine, and that the Holy Spirit is also God, with the full characteristics of deity. And when Jesus speaks of God, He refers to Him as the Father. So while there is only one God, He manifests Himself in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. That He is not one God with three names is evident from the fact that all three are individually present at the same time on several occasions. The doctrine of the Trinity is simply our best attempt to understand and express these truths and to hold them all simultaneously.

In stating these seemingly incompatible truths, we are acknowledging that it is beyond the ability of our limited human minds to fully contain the concepts of an infinite God. Stated another way, if God were so small that we could fully understand Him, He would not be worthy of our worship. So as we strive to understand the truth of the Trinity, it should cause us to grow in wonder and awe of our infinite God. Our inability to fully comprehend God should never be a stumbling block to our faith.

Many physical analogies have been offered to help explain the Trinity, none of which can truly do justice to this great truth. Yet perhaps this one will be helpful. Consider a snowman. It is one entity - a snowman - but it is made up of three parts: the top ball, the middle ball, and the bottom ball. All three are of the same substance (snow), and we can speak of each one separately, or we can speak of a complete snowman.

2.2 The Oneness of God

The oneness of God is expressed clearly in Deuteronomy 6:4, *Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.* and in Isaiah 44:6, *"This is what the LORD says - Israel's King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God."*

The truth of God's oneness is affirmed in the New Testament in Mark 12:28-30 even as Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 6:4, *28 One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?" 29 "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'*

So the Bible consistently teaches that God is _____.