

Basic Christianity

Part 8 – The Trinity – Pt 1

Eph 1:15-19 – God wants us to experience: 1. a spirit of wisdom and revelation, 2. the eyes of understanding being enlightened, 3. knowledge of the hope of His calling, 4. the riches of the glory of His inheritance, 5. the exceeding greatness of His power.

But where is this to be found? In the knowledge of Him.

For many, the Trinity is a very confusing issue.

Christadelphians don't believe in the Trinity, nor do the Jehovah's Witnesses, nor do Unitarians.

They are quick to point out that Trinity isn't a word found in the Bible.

Other words not in the Bible are: Bible, relationship, exorcism, rapture, theology, the Fall, original sin, self-esteem, sex, the Incarnation, Pentecostal.

But that doesn't mean that these things are not dealt with in the Bible, or that they don't exist.

The Trinity is so confusing to people that Muslims believe that the Christian Trinity consists of the Father, Jesus and the virgin Mary. That's what's in the Koran¹.

The problem is that people are using finite minds to understand an infinite truth.

The idea of the Trinity is one of the defining concepts of Christianity.

So what do Christians mean when they talk about the Trinity?

Trinity: one God expressed in three ways – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Another term I'll be using is Godhead – the divine nature.

The Bible teaches that the whole point of the Law of Moses and all the work of the Old Testament prophets was to prepare the way, and point forward to the coming of the Messiah.

That's Jesus who Christians believe is divine – part of the Trinity.

Today, I'm going to ask these questions: If that is so, wouldn't we expect something about the Trinity to be revealed in the Old Testament?

Shouldn't there be at least something in the Old Testament to indicate that the Godhead – one God – is actually plural in nature, a composite?

The Trinity In The Old Testament

In English we usually end words in an "s" to make them plural, but in Hebrew they usually end them in "im". Eg. cherub-im, seraph-im.

God is revealed in the Old Testament by certain names.

Elohim is one – notice it ends in im, because it's a plural word.

Literally, it means gods.

Ex 20:3 You shall have no other gods (Elohim²) before Me. (cf. Deut 5:7)

Gen 1:1-12 In this passage, every time the word "God" is used, it is actually the word Elohim, and could literally be translated "Gods".

Elohim is used more than 2300 times in the Old Testament.

Adonai is also another plural word³ used as a name for God, and occurs in the Old Testament, always about God, more than 300 times⁴.

Don't be confused – this is not teaching that there is more than one God.

In the Gen 1 passage, Elohim is plural, but “He” is singular.

Elohim and Adonai are names of God, and through these names He reveals something of His nature – that He is plural – one God, multiple expressions.

These names help us to understand some things about the God of the OT.

1. The concept of one God expressed in a plural way didn't begin with Christianity – it was always taught in the Old Testament too.
2. The God of the Old Testament is therefore the same as the God of the New Testament.
3. It helps us make sense of some Old Testament verses.

Isaiah 6:8 Also I heard the voice of the Lord (Adonai), saying: “Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?”...

Genesis 1:26 Then God (Elohim) said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness ...”

Who is “Us”? It's the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Gen 11:6-7 And the LORD (Yahweh) said, “Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them. (7) Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.”

It's not teaching that there is more than one God – but that there's a plurality in the Godhead – the divine nature.

You cannot dissect God.

Now let's look at another word that describes God.

Two words can be translated into English as “one”.

Yachiyd⁵ is used 11 times⁶, and means “just one”.

Another word is echad⁷ which means a “united one”⁸ – It indicates a compound unity.

Gen 1:5 God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first (echad) day.

Gen 2:24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one (echad) flesh.

Gen 11:6 And the LORD said, “Indeed the people are one (echad) and they all have one (echad) language, and this is what they begin to do ...”

In each of these instances, it refers to a composite one, a united one.

It is much like a cup of coffee, which is a compound of water, sugar and milk.

Whereas Yachiyd would be like a glass of water.

So, which one of these two words describes God?

The cup of coffee (echad – a composite one) is used.

The one that describes water is never used to describe God.

You have to understand this concept if you're going to make sense of certain Scriptures – because God is a composite one.

Deut 6:4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!

In English, all the difficulties of this verse have been smoothed over.

Literally, this says: Yahweh⁹ (singular) our Gods (Elohim – plural), is (singular) Yahweh (singular) one (united one)!

This is a very confused sentence if you don't understand that God is a compound unity.

Light is a good example: it is just light, but if you put it through a prism, you see that it is composed of a spectrum of colours – red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet.

This helps us make sense of some other passages of Scripture.

Gen 18:1-3 – Yahweh appeared to Abraham, but when Abraham looked, he saw three men.

Jer 23:5-6 – The name of the Messiah will be Yahweh our Righteousness.

Is 9:6 For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. and His name will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Is 7:14 Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.

More about the virgin birth some other time – but what are the implications of calling someone Immanuel – God with us?

When God gives someone a name, that name means exactly what He wants it to.

Jesus was God with us – the physical manifestation of Almighty God.

Micah 5:2 But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.

Jesus always existed.

Ps 2:7,12 I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, “You are My Son, today I have begotten You. (12) Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.

Put their trust in whom? Jesus.

Yet the following Scripture expressly forbids anyone to put their trust in anyone besides Yahweh!

Jer 17:5,7 Thus says the LORD (Yahweh): “Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the LORD. (7) Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD (Yahweh), and whose hope is the LORD (Yahweh).”

So we come to the following conclusions.

1. The God of the OT is the same as the God of the NT.
2. God reveals Himself as being plural.
3. To know God you must know Him in His plural nature. If you do, God promises 1. a spirit of wisdom and revelation, 2. the eyes of your understanding will be enlightened, 3. knowledge of the hope of His calling, 4. riches of the glory of His inheritance, 5. the exceeding greatness of His power.

¹ The Qur'an – Women

² See Wigram, George V. *The Englishman's Hebrew & Chaldee Concordance of the Old Testament* p79

³ *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia Vol 3* p157

⁴ *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament Vol 1* p13

⁵ Strong's Exhaustive Concordance (Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary) No. 3173

⁶ Wigram, George V. *The Englishman's Hebrew & Chaldee Concordance of the Old Testament* p523

⁷ Strong's Exhaustive Concordance (Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary) No. 259

⁸ See Wigram, George V. *The Englishman's Hebrew & Chaldee Concordance of the Old Testament* p41

⁹ Strong's Exhaustive Concordance (Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary) No. 3068