

# APOLOGIA

## *Finding Answers to Life's Most Interesting Questions*

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## 5 UNDERSTANDING THE TRINITY

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Sam the Skeptic says, "You Christians say the God is both one and three. How can that possibly be true...aren't you just confusing people?! Isn't the Trinity one God who reveals himself to man in three different ways?"

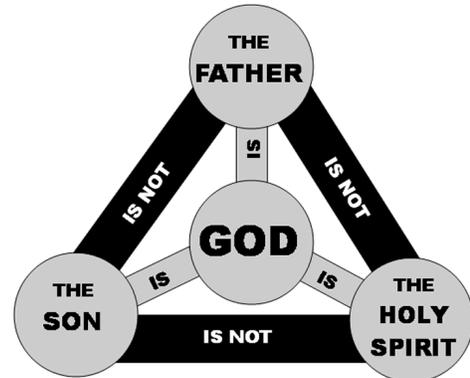
### A. WARM-UP QUESTIONS

1. If something in the Bible is confusing or doesn't make sense, should we reject it? Why or why not?
2. How can a Christian respond to passages in the Bible that are very confusing even after much study?

## B. IS THE TRINITY A CONTRADICTION?

The doctrine of the Trinity is foundational to the Christian faith. It is crucial for properly understanding what God is like, how he relates to us, and how we should relate to him. But it also raises many difficult questions. How can God be both one and three? Is the Trinity a contradiction?

While God is three distinct persons, each one being fully God, and there being only one God, it is also acknowledged that how this takes place is a mystery and beyond human comprehension. These three arguments are not to be viewed as being a contradiction.



## C. THREE SUMMARY STATEMENTS OF THE TRINITY

1. God is \_\_\_\_\_ persons.
2. Each person is \_\_\_\_\_.
3. There is \_\_\_\_\_.

## D. GOD IS THREE DISTINCT PERSONS

Evidence for the distinctness of the three persons of the Godhead is found in the Bible. In other words, the Father is not the Son, who is not the Holy Spirit, who is not the Son or the Father.

Circle the words in the following verses that indicate the Trinity as being three distinct persons.

- ❖ *As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." (Matt. 3:16-17 NIV)*
- ❖ *Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance. (1 Pet. 1:1-2 NIV)*
- ❖ *At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "Don't do that! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers and sisters who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For it is the Spirit of prophecy who bears testimony to Jesus." (Rev. 19:10 NIV)*

## E. EACH PERSON IS FULLY GOD

Not only is the Godhead made up of three persons who are distinctive in being and function, but also each of the three is fully God.

Circle the words in the following verses that show the Father as being fully God, the Son as fully God, or the Holy Spirit as fully God.

- ❖ *Paul, an apostle -- sent not from men nor by a man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead -- (Gal. 1:1 NIV)*

- ❖ *A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" (Jn. 20:26-28 NIV)*
- ❖ *Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied just to human beings but to God." (Acts 5:3-4 NIV)*

**F. THERE IS ONE GOD**

Circle the words in the following verses that show there is one God.

- ❖ *Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. (Deut. 6:4 NIV)*
- ❖ *The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. (Mk. 12:29 NIV)*
- ❖ *Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith. (Rom. 3:29-30 NIV)*

**G. FALSE VIEWS OF THE TRINITY**

	The view that God is actually three separate and distinct deities but not one (polytheism).
	This view asserts that God is one person who appears to people in different "modes" at different times.
	The view that Jesus was a created being, not fully God
	The view that Jesus was God but not human.
	The view that Jesus was only a man but was adopted by God because of his divine powers

**H. FOUR BAD ANALOGIES OF THE TRINITY**

In what ways are the following analogies inadequate for describing the Trinity?

1. Analogy No. 1: The Trinity is like an egg. In one egg you have the white, the yoke, and the shell composing one full egg.
2. Analogy No. 2: The Trinity is like water. Water has three states: solid, liquid, and gas. Although the water changes forms it is still H2O. Just as water changes forms so too is the trinity.

3. Analogy No. 3: The Trinity is like a three-leaf clover. There are three different cloves that represent the three different persons of the trinity.
4. Analogy No. 4: The Trinity is like a man who is a father, husband, and son. Although he is one he has different roles to different people.

**NOTES**