

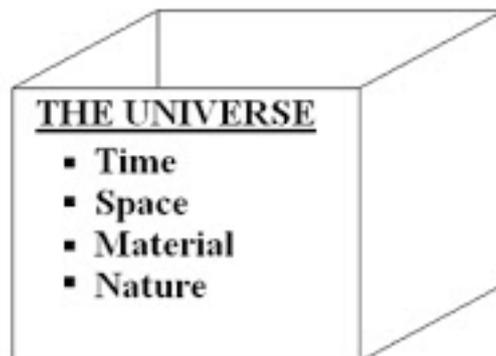
LESSON TWO - GOD

The doctrine of God is essential to understanding the Bible and life. No human can fully understand God, as He has limited the depth of our understanding of Him (Job 11:7; Isaiah 55:8-9; Romans 11:33). The finite can never comprehensively grasp the infinite. However, that does not mean that we know nothing of God. Because we are made in God's image, the Creator can communicate to us in a meaningful and true manner. RC Sproul explains,

“The incomprehensibility of God does not mean that we know nothing about God. Rather, it means that our knowledge is partial and limited, falling short of a total or comprehensive knowledge. The knowledge that God gives of Himself through revelation is both real and useful. We can know God to the degree that He chooses to reveal Himself. The finite can “grasp” the infinite, but the finite can never hold the infinite within its grasp. There is always more to God than we apprehend....Martin Luther referred to two aspects of God—the hidden and the revealed. A portion of the divine knowledge remains hidden to our gaze. We work in the light of what God has revealed.”

GOD

- Timeless
- Infinite
- Immaterial
- Supernatural



THE UNCAUSED CAUSE

The universe of time, space, and matter had a beginning. The Bible states right up front, “*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.*” (Gen. 1:1) God is clearly stated as the **UNCAUSED CAUSE** of the universe of time, space and matter. It is HE that “*In the beginning [time] created the heaven [space] and the earth [matter].*”

Since God as the Uncaused Cause created these things, then it logically follows that He is not controlled by time, space, and matter. So God transcends them. He as the Uncaused Cause of the universe must be self-existent, immaterial, timeless or eternal and nonspatial – since the **UNCAUSED CAUSE** created all of these. He is not part of the universe or the sum of the parts of the universe.

Some sceptics ask: “Then, who made God?” Remember, everything that has a beginning has a cause. God is outside space, time, and matter because He did not have a beginning, *so He therefore does not need a cause!* God is the eternal, self-existent, self-contained, absolute Creator, which makes Him the Supreme Being and the ultimate

source of all other created beings. We depend on God for our being; He depends on none. This is a rational and logical conclusion. By contrast, to argue that God is a self-created being does violate rationality and logic. For nothing can be self-created. If God created Himself He would have to exist before He is!



TRIUNITY OF GOD

God is revealed in Scripture as eternally existing as one Triune God in essence but who subsists as three persons - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Westminster Shorter Catechism put it succinctly, “There are three Persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost: these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory” (Q. 6). Alan Cairns clears up some common misconceptions,

“The doctrine of the Trinity emphasizes the unity of the divine essence. What theologians call His “numerical essence” is one and indivisible. Each Trinitarian person possesses the undivided essence, not a fragment of it. To imagine the three persons of the Godhead each having a third of the divine essence is an absurdity, for infinity cannot be fragmented or fractionalized.”

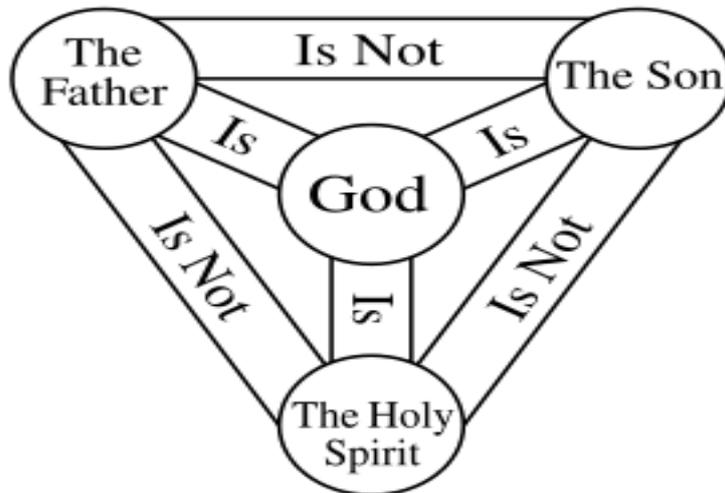
The word “Trinity” is one that is derived from Latin and Greek terms meaning three in one, or the one which is three. As finite humans, we cannot fully comprehend the Triunity of God but we are called to believe it (1 Cor. 13: 12). Dr. South once observed that if you try to comprehend the doctrine of the Trinity, you may lose your mind, and if you deny it you will lose your soul. The Bible unfolds the doctrine of the Trinity in clear Scriptural propositions:

(1) God is One God, “*Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord*” (Deut. 6:4; 1 Tim. 2:5)

(2) Full Deity of all Three Persons of the Godhead – All Persons of the Godhead have all the attributes of deity. The Father is truly God (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 8:6), the Son is truly God (John 1:1-3; Heb. 1:8), and the Holy Spirit is truly God (Acts 5:3-5). John gave the classical description of this in his epistle,

This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness,

because the Spirit is truth. For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son.” (1 John 5:6-9)



(3) Distinction in the Three Persons of the Godhead – The Bible reveals that the Three Persons of the Godhead are not simply *ways* that God expresses Himself. The Father is not the Son; and the Son is not the Father; and neither of them is the Holy Spirit. We discover these eternal personal distinctions from the earliest chapters of the Bible, “*And God said, Let us make man in Our image, after our likeness*” (Gen. 1:26) The New Testament gives abundant evidence to the fact that there is only one God, yet He exists, and always has existed, as a Trinity of Persons. The Lord Jesus Christ spoke of distinct operations of different Persons of the Triune God in the Gospel of John,

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. (John 14:26)

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you. (John 16:13-15)

John MacArthur gives a helpful explanation,

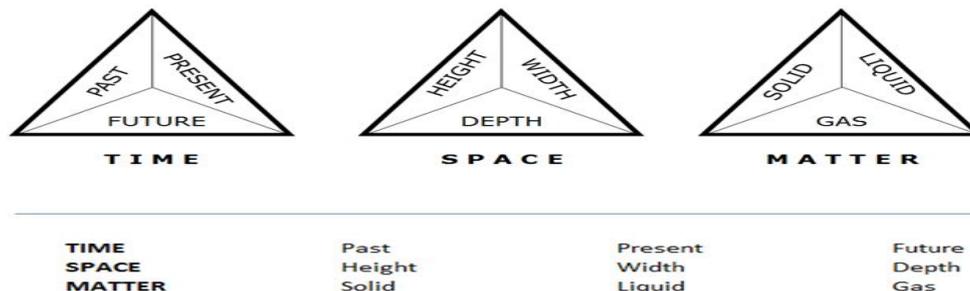
“In describing the Trinity, the New Testament clearly distinguishes three Persons who are all simultaneously active. They are not merely modes or manifestations of the same person (as Oneness theology incorrectly asserts) who sometimes acts as Father, sometimes as Son, and sometimes as Spirit. At Christ’s baptism, all three Persons were simultaneously active (Matt. 3:16–17), with the Son being

baptized, the Spirit descending, and the Father speaking from Heaven. Jesus Himself prayed to the Father (cf. Matt. 6:9), taught that His will was distinct from His Father's (Matt. 26:39), promised that He would ask the Father to send the Spirit (John 14:16), and asked the Father to glorify Him (John 17:5). These actions would not make sense unless the Father and the Son were two distinct Persons. Elsewhere in the New Testament, the Holy Spirit intercedes before the Father on behalf of believers (Rom. 8:26), as does the Son, who is our Advocate (1 John 2:1). Again, the distinctness of each Person is in view."

God is not like any created being so any analogy or metaphor that seeks to describe the Trinity naturally falls short. An infinite God cannot be fully demonstrated in a finite illustration. However, there are some analogies that at least demonstrate that the idea of three in one is not logically incoherent. For instance, the one universe is made up of time, space, and matter. Each of these distinct elements are tripartite e.g. length, breadth, height or past, present, and future. A triangle (as in the above illustration) is one triangle but yet with three sides.

The Trinity

We believe in a trinity of trinities and can see the finger prints of God in his creation.



ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

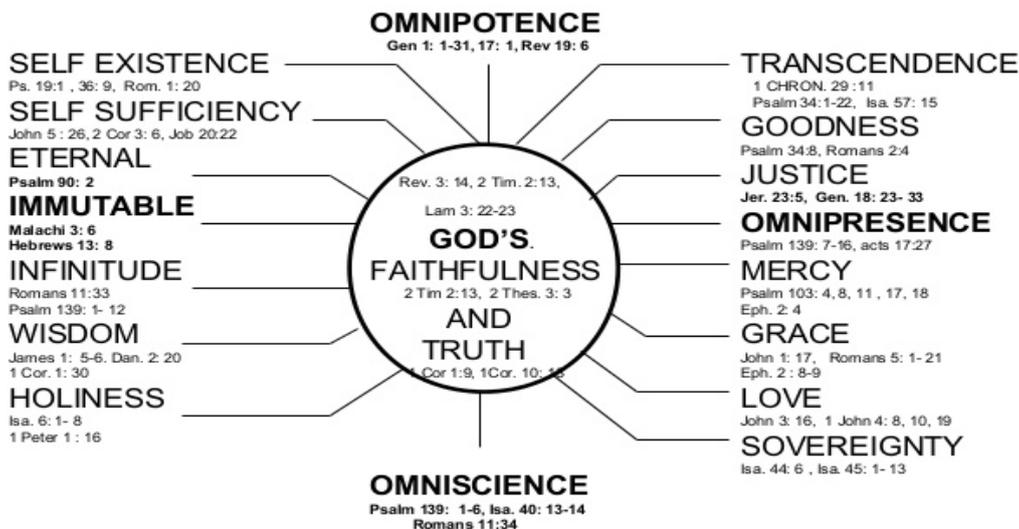
God has a number of unique attributes. These include the following 4 key attributes:

(1) GOD IS OMNIPOTENT – God holds all power over His creation. He has unlimited ability to act according to His own perfect will (Job. 42:7; Jer. 32:17; Matt. 19:26; Luke 1:37; Rev. 19:6). There are no rogue molecules running amok in the universe. Nothing can overcome or withstand the Almighty power of God. What He promises to do for us, He is always able to fully carry out. The great Nebuchadnezzar testified to the omnipotence of Almighty God, “*He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest thou?*” (Daniel 4:35)

(2) GOD IS OMNIPRESENT – God transcends space, as He is not subject to its limitations. He is fully present at every point in space, “*Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the LORD. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD.*” (Jer. 23:24; cf. Ps. 139:7–10) We are limited by space. Only an infinite God is capable of omnipresence. There is not a place we need to go to be in the presence of God. He is always with us and accessible to us. That is the greatest comfort in this doctrine. The

terrifying side to this is for the sinner. There is no corner of this world that he or she can hide from God. Even in hell, the sinner is not separated from God's presence but merely mercy. His eternal wrath is with them.

ATTRIBUTES OF GOD



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(3) GOD IS OMNISCIENT – The word omniscient means “to have all (*omni*) knowledge (*science*).” Only God is omniscient, “*Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite.*” (Psa. 147:5; Prov. 15:3; 16:33; Matt. 10:29) He knows all things possible, whether they ever become actual or not. RC Sproul explains,

“God, being infinite, is able to be aware of all things, to understand all things, and to comprehend all things. He never learns anything or acquires new knowledge. The future as well as the past and present are completely known by Him. He is surprised by nothing.”

(4) GOD IS IMMUTABLE – God cannot change or be changed in His perfections or essence, “*I am the LORD, I change not*” (Malachi 3:6; James 1:17; Isa. 46:10; Psa. 33:11). The Lord is the same yesterday, today and forever. That is a great comfort to us as His promises can be trusted. The Lord cannot and will not forsake His own. The certainty of this rests not in ourselves but on the character of the immutable, omniscient, and omnipotent God. The storms of our life only prove the strength of our Anchor. Fear should leave us when we remember that God is always with us. Countless saints have proven this throughout the ages. So can you today when you look by faith on this firm foundation of God's promises. God has never failed and He cannot fail.

No matter what your problems are now, *He will never leave you.*

No matter how you feel about it, *He will never leave you.*

No matter what comes to your life this week, *He will never leave you.*

SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

The 21st century boasts of man at the centre of politics, business, science, technology, philosophy, and morality. Man begins and ends with himself. This is also true in respect of religion. Every alternative form of religious thought begins with man and seeks to reform man by his own efforts to work his way back to God. By contrast, Christianity is unique in that it starts with God and not man.

The Bible repeatedly declares that God is the ultimate governor of the universe, “*who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will*” (Eph. 1:11; cf. Psa. 135:6). Our Westminster Confession is absolutely right to declare, “God from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely, and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass.” God is the absolute Sovereign Ruler of this world independent of and unlimited by anyone else. He is the sovereign over:

- (i) **What happens**
- (ii) **When it happens**
- (iii) **How it happens**
- (iv) **Why it happens**

And even **(iv) What happens after it happens.**

This is always true of all events in every culture, in every continent, and in every century. God is sovereign over creation, salvation, and history. It includes

- (1) The righteous actions of men (Eph. 2:10)
- (2) The ungodly actions of men (Gen. 50:20; Psa. 76:10; Prov. 16:4; Acts 4:27-28)
- (3) The lifespan of any man (Job 14:5; Heb. 9:27)
- (4) Calling of any man (Acts 9:15; 1 Cor. 1:1)
- (5) Events that appear accidental (Prov. 16:33)
- (6) The means as well as the end (Prov. 21:1; 2 Thess. 2:13; Acts 13:48)

The potential for our circumstances to cloud our faith in God’s sovereignty is always a real possibility. Are we willing to trust Him when our world disintegrates? Is God greater than our circumstances? Do you have a “nervous faith”? We need to learn that if the *past* and the prophesied *future* are governed by the sovereign will of God, then so is the *present*. God has not ceased to rule over the affairs of men and women. He reigns over all and can sovereignly work with or without the means of external events and persons to accomplish His ultimate purposes.

There is no more comforting doctrine for the people of God in Scripture than God’s unfettered absolute sovereignty over the affairs of this planet. Living in our fast-paced knowledge-based society, it is all too easy to be intimidated by the powers of governments and corporations if we judge them from the horizontal only. However, when we judge from the vertical also we then can see that it is God who still raises up nations, governments, kings, and even multi-national corporations. Our God is still in control of this universe and our lives, “*He ruleth by His power for ever*” (Psa. 66:7). Heaven rules! Nothing has changed about this truth in the 21st century! His will shall ultimately be done. We can sing today, “*Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth*” (Rev. 19:6).