Why Is the Trinity Important?

What is the biblical basis for the doctrine of the Trinity? Why use the word “Trinity”, which is not found in the Scripture? What are some of the most common misrepresentations of the Trinity? We will also look couple of surprising verses that speak on the Trinity.

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1. **The trinity – doctrine in crisis?** 
   1. When was the last time you heard your pastor teach on the doctrine of the Trinity?
   2. **“In the music we sing, it seems like we’re not as Trinitarian as we think we are”** *The Trinity missing in contemporary Christian worship music: While churches praise God from whom all blessings flow, they don't praise Father, Son, and Holy* Ghost (Christianity Today, August 24 2020) - The interdisciplinary lyric analysis (Southern Wesleyan University) by Professor Michael Tapper, English professor Britt Terry, and religious studies student Jacob Clapp: “The 30 most popular hymns and the 30 most popular worship songs over the past five years. Evangelical churches mostly sing about Jesus, with only occasional references to the Father and few (if any) mentions of the Holy Spirit. Songs that mention the relationships within the Godhead are even rarer.”
   3. Missing the Doctrine of the Trinity in Christian publishing in Finland.
   4. Other anecdotal “evidence”.
2. **What is Christianity? Trinitarian creeds**
   1. **Apostles’ creed** – Trinitarian in structure: affirming belief in God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.
   2. **Nicene creed** (Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan Creed). “God from God, Light from Light.”
   3. **Athanasian creed** – “Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic Faith. Which Faith except everyone do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly. And the Catholic Faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the Substance…”
3. **Trinity – “una essentia, tres personae”** 
   1. One What – Three “Who’s
      1. There is one God (Isa. 43:10b; James 2:19)
      2. God is three persons (Matthew 3:16-17; 28:19; 2. Cor. 13:13; 1 Peter 1:2)
      3. Each person is fully God (1 Peter. 1:2; Joh. 1:1-3; Acts. 5:3-4)
   2. Echoes of The Trinity in OT
4. Justin Martyr: Story of Sodom and “two Yahwe’s” in Gen 18-19. Appendix #1
5. Angel of the Lord is Yahwe Himself in some OT texts.
6. The pre-existent Lord (1) sent by the Lord (2) along with His Spirit (3)   
    Isaiah. 48:12-17
7. Father calling the Son a God, LORD and everlasting Creator Hebrews 1:5-14.
   1. Jesus was crucified for blasphemy because he claimed to be “equal with God”.
   2. Nobody claimed nor blamed that he made himself equal to the angels (John. 5:18; 10:28-33).
   3. Synoptics and the Trinity
   4. Father – Matthew 10:19-20
   5. Son – Luke 21:14-15
   6. Holy Spirit – Mark. 13:11
   7. Isaiah’s vision and the Trinity Isaiah 6:1-10
   8. Trinitarian worship: “Holy, holy, holy Lord God Sabaioth.”
   9. Jesus’ glory – John 12:37-41
   10. Holy Spirit speaking – Acts. 28:25-27
8. **Some common objections**
   1. “Jesus is Son of God, not same as God”
      1. Jesus called God his **own** (Grk. *idion*) Father making himself equal with God the Father (John. 5:18).
   2. “The word ‘Trinity’ is not in the Bible”
      1. Neither words *Christianity, person, Sunday school etc.*
      2. Sincere, but too narrow concern: *Extra biblical words can capture Biblical truths and Biblical words can also be used in un-Biblical way*.
      3. When was the term “trinity” first used?
   3. Is the Trinity irrational? 1+1+1=3?
   4. “Trinity was invented by the Church at Nicea (325 A.D)”
      1. What did post-apostolic and ante-Nicean Christians believe? Quotes from Theophilos, Tertullian and Hippolytos. Appendix #1b
9. **Early heresies – same as today**
   1. Adoptionism – Jesus, ordinary man, was “adopted” as God’s son.
   2. Modalism – One divine being = one person, three different “roles”, forms (modes).
   3. Subordinationism – Son is Divine, but not equal in being to the Father.
   4. Arianism – Denying the full Deity of the Son and the Holy Spirit.
10. **Significance – living out the trinitarian spirituality**
    1. Theology: God is Love because God is triune
    2. Preaching: Safeguarding the high Christology of the Gospel of salvation
    3. Worship: Balancing Christian spirituality – “Can I pray to the Holy Spirit?”
    4. Pastoral: Spirit glorifying the Son in whom we see the Father (John 14:7-9)

***Suggested Readings:***

THE THREE CREEDS – Nicene Creed; Apostles Creed; Athanasian Creed (Trinity School for Ministry) <http://www.tsm.edu/the_three_creeds/>

Grudem, Wayne: Systematic Theology – An Introduction To Biblical Doctrine (Zondervan 1994)

Hall, Christopher A.: Learning Theology with the Church Fathers (IVP Academics, 2002) s

Horton, Michael: The Christian Faith – A Systematic Theology For Pilgrims on the Way (Zondervan, 2011)

Reeves, Michael: Delighting in the Trinity – An Introduction to the Christian Faith (IVP Academic, 2012)

Ware, Bruce A.: Father, Son & Holy Spirit – Relationships, Roles & Relevance (Crossway, 2005)

White, James R.: The Forgotten Trinity – Recovering the Heart of Christian Belief (Bethany House, 1998)

**Appendix 1a**  
  
**Justin Martyr (d. 168)   
  
 “***(After another pause.)* And now have you not perceived, my friends, that one of the three, who is both God and Lord, and ministers to Him who is in the heavens, is Lord of the two [angels](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01476d.htm)? For when [the [angels](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01476d.htm)] proceeded to [Sodom](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14130a.htm), He remained behind, and communed with [Abraham](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01051a.htm) in the words recorded by [Moses](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10596a.htm); and when He departed after the conversation, [Abraham](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01051a.htm) went back to his place. And when he came [to [Sodom](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14130a.htm)], the two [angels](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01476d.htm) no longer conversed with [Lot](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09366a.htm), but Himself, as the [Scripture](https://www.newadvent.org/bible/index.html) makes evident; and He is the Lord who received commission from the Lord who [remains] in the heavens, i.e., the Maker of all things, to inflict upon [Sodom](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14130a.htm) and [Gomorrha](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14130a.htm) the [judgments] which the [Scripture](https://www.newadvent.org/bible/index.html) describes in these terms: 'The Lord rained down upon [Sodom](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14130a.htm) and [Gomorrha](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14130a.htm) sulphur and fire from the Lord out of heaven.'”   
**Justin Martyr – Dialogue with Trypho, Chapter 56**

**Appendix 1b**

**THEOPHILOS OF ANTIOCH (116-181)**  
“In like manner also the three days which were before the luminaries, are types of the **Trinity**, of [God](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm), and His Word, and His wisdom.” ***To Autolycus, book 2:15***

**TERTULLIAN (145-220)**  
“The simple, indeed, (I will not call them unwise and unlearned,) who always constitute the majority of [believers](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05769a.htm), are startled at the dispensation (of the Three in One), on the ground that their very rule of [faith](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05752c.htm) withdraws them from the world's plurality of gods to the one only [true](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15073a.htm) [God](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm); not understanding that, although He is the one only [God](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm), He must yet be [believed](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02408b.htm) in with His own οἰκονομία . The numerical order and distribution of the Trinity they assume to be a division of the Unity; whereas the Unity which derives the Trinity out of its own self is so far from being destroyed, that it is actually supported by it. They are constantly throwing out against us that we are preachers of two gods and three gods, while they take to themselves pre-eminently the credit of being worshippers of the One [God](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm); just as if the Unity itself with irrational deductions did not produce [heresy](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07256b.htm), and the Trinity rationally considered constitute the [truth](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15073a.htm).” ***Against Praxeas, Chapter 3.***

“Thus the connection of the Father in the [Son](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14142b.htm), and of the Son in the Paraclete, produces three coherent Persons, who are yet distinct One from Another. These Three are one [*essence*](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05543b.htm), not one Person, as it is said, I and my Father are One, [John 10:30](https://www.newadvent.org/bible/joh010.htm#verse30) in respect of unity of substance not singularity of number.” ***Against Praxeas, Chapter 25.***

**HIPPOLYTUS (170-235)**  
“These things then, brethren, are declared by the [Scriptures](https://www.newadvent.org/bible/index.html). And the blessed John, in the testimony of his [Gospel](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06655b.htm), gives us an account of this economy (disposition) and acknowledges this Word as [God](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm), when he says, In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with [God](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm), and the Word was God. If, then, the Word was with [God](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm), and was also [God](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm), what follows? Would one say that he speaks of two Gods? I shall not indeed speak of two Gods, but of one; of two Persons however, and of a third economy (disposition), viz., the [grace](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06689a.htm) of the [Holy Ghost](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07409a.htm). For the Father indeed is One, but there are two Persons, because there is also the Son; and then there is the third, the [Holy Spirit](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07409a.htm). The Father decrees, the Word executes, and the Son is manifested, through whom the Father is [believed](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02408b.htm) on. The economy of harmony is led back to one [God](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm); for God is One. It is the Father who commands, and the Son who obeys, and the [Holy Spirit](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07409a.htm) who gives understanding: the Father who is above all, and the Son who is through all, and the [Holy Spirit](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07409a.htm) who is in all. And we cannot otherwise think of one [God](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm), but by believing in [truth](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15073a.htm) in Father and Son and [Holy Spirit](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07409a.htm) . . . the Father seeks to be worshipped in none other way than this, gave this charge to the [disciples](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05029a.htm) after He rose from the dead: Go and teach all nations, [baptizing](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02258b.htm) them in the name of the [Father](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608a.htm), and of the [Son](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14142b.htm), and of the [Holy Ghost](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07409a.htm). And by this He showed, that whosoever omitted any one of these, failed in glorifying God perfectly. For it is through this Trinity that the Father is [glorified](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06585a.htm). For the Father willed, the Son did, the Spirit manifested. The whole Scriptures, then, proclaim this [truth](https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15073a.htm).” ***Against the Heresy of One Noetus, Chapter 14.***