

Foundations Lesson #20

God & the Trinity, Part 1

The Bible nowhere attempts to prove or argue the existence of God. The Scriptures below give us the Bible's approach to the subject of the existence of God:

“...because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists” (Hebrews 11:6)

“The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God.'” (Psalm 14:1)

The writers of the Scripture, both Old and New Testaments, clearly portrayed the existence of God as a fact which was simply taken for granted, and rightly so. Whereas few people contend the existence of God, many contend about His nature. It is therefore very important for us to study what God has revealed about Himself in the Scripture.

There are two main reasons why this lesson needs to be included in a course designed for new believers. First of all, since God is infinite and we're finite, it can be difficult for us to grasp who he is. So any help we can receive in understanding God is more than worth it. But secondly, the truths in this lesson separate Biblical Christianity from cults and false religions. All groups who profess to worship God claim to be true, but the truth of God's word is **the standard** by which all claims must be judged. What God has written about himself has to be the basis, the foundation, of our understanding of who he is.

If we humans, on our own, were to try to discover or try to figure out who God is, we would get it wrong every time. That's why man-made religions differ so vastly from one another. That's also why the only hope we have of getting it right is for God to reveal himself to us. Much to our great relief and even greater blessing, he's done exactly that by providing us with his written word. We humans, in humility, are required to accept God's written word as the only basis and the only hope we have for knowing who God is, or for knowing him personally and experientially.

But many don't want to humble themselves. So they either disregard God's word completely, or they pick and choose which parts of God's written revelation they want to accept and which parts they want to reject. In doing so, they – in great pride – are actually setting themselves up to be the final authority, something no human is even remotely close to being qualified to do.

So let's study what God has revealed about himself. Roman Numeral number one on our outline addresses the issue of the nature of God in essence. What that means is, if nothing existed other than God, what would he be like? What could he do? How could he be described or identified?

God is eternal, which means there never has been and never will be any point in time where God hasn't existed. He always has been and always will be. Like a ring, which goes around and around, but it doesn't have a beginning or an ending, so also God has never begun to exist and will never cease to exist.

Ps. 90:2 Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world,
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

1Ti. 1:17 Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for
ever and ever. Amen.

Rev. 22:13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the
End.

By the way, Alpha and Omega are simply the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. In English terms, it would be as if God were declaring that he is the “A” and the “Z”.

God knows all things. When we talk to fellow humans, often we have to explain how we're feeling or what happened or what was said. But when we talk to God, that's completely unnecessary. He knows all those things far better and in far greater detail than we do. He never needs our information.

Ps. 147:5 Great is our Lord and mighty in power; his understanding has no limit.

Pr. 21:30 There is no wisdom, no insight, no plan that can succeed against the LORD.

1Jn. 3:20b For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.

Next, God is omnipresent, which means that his presence is everywhere.

Ps. 139:7-10 Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.

This concept can be a little difficult for us to grasp, because we're so accustomed to the physical world in which we live, where any space can only be occupied by one object at a time. We just have to realize that in the unseen realm, the realm of the spirit, those limitations don't exist. And, unlike the pantheistic view of God which says that God is everything, the Bible makes a clear distinction between God the Creator and his creation. God is distinct from the universe he's created, but you can't go anywhere in the universe to escape from his presence. He knows everything. He sees everything. He is everywhere. He also continues to be deeply concerned about all that he's created. No one can rightfully accuse God of being an absentee father.

Scripture also makes it plain that there's nothing God can't do.

Lk. 1:37 For nothing is impossible with God.

Jer. 32:17 “Ah, Sovereign LORD, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you.

Over 300 times in the Scripture, God has revealed himself as the ***Almighty***. He can do absolutely anything.

We have to be careful. God has many aspects to his nature, and we need to understand and appreciate every one of them. No single one of his attributes alone gives us anywhere close to a complete picture of this person who's created us and everything else. Is God ***Almighty***? Absolutely he is, but he's also incredibly tender. The Scripture says that the mountains melt like wax before the LORD, and that the voice of the Lord strikes with flashes of lightning, yet with great gentleness and delicacy we read that, “a bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out.” We can be comforted and encouraged that God has always been in the business of revealing himself to humans, if we're truly hungry to know him. He desires, even longs for us to know him better and better. So as we love him, seek him, and walk with him, we ***will*** have greater first-hand knowledge of the Holy One. He'll see to that. He's faithful.

God also describes himself as a consuming fire.

Heb. 12:28-29 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our “God is a consuming fire.”

Dt. 4:24 For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.

Dt. 9:3a But be assured today that the LORD your God is the one who goes across ahead of you like a devouring fire.

Then, as we discovered in Lesson #14, God is *life*.

1Jn. 5:20c He is the true God and eternal life.

Jn. 14:6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

1Ti 6:13a In the sight of God, who gives life to everything,

It only stands to reason that the God who gives eternal life to believers *has* eternal life in himself so that he can give it away.

We also see in Scripture that God is light. That's a great contrast with the realm of sin and evil which is identified as darkness. Light reveals but darkness conceals. Those who attempt to cover up their deeds of darkness will eventually find out that because God is light, he is more than capable of unmasking their secret acts. The Scripture declares that the light shines in the darkness – everything that is now concealed will be brought out into the open. You can read about all that in Luke 12:2-3 and Ephesians 5:8-14.

1Jn. 1:5 This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.

1Ti. 6:15b-16a God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see.

Jn. 8:12 When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

If you walk into a room that's completely dark, you have to be very careful. Why? Because you can't see where you're going. If you start running, you'll probably get hurt. In the same way, the people of this life who don't know God, have no idea where they're going. God's light is the only hope for them. Amen.

Foundations Lesson #20

God & the Trinity, Part 2

Roman Numeral number two on our outline addresses the subject of God's nature in relationship – what he's like in relating to us humans, or to angels, or to his creation. In the Kingdom of God, everything is relational. So we need to know not only what God can do, but also how he interacts with us. The first and most important truth in this regard is that everything which exists, owes a debt of gratitude to God for its existence. He is the creator of all things seen and unseen.

Heb. 3:4 For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything.

Gen. 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Ro. 1:25 They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator – who is forever praised. Amen.

If you'll notice the Scripture doesn't say that God is **a** creator, as though he were in competition with other creators. No. He is **the** creator. There is none other. As our creator, he knows us better than we know ourselves. But not only has God brought into being everything that exists, it also continues to exist because of his power and goodness. He's the sustainer of all things. He's the glue that holds the universe together.

Ps. 3:5 I lie down and sleep; I wake again, because the LORD sustains me.

Heb. 1:3a The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.

Ps. 55:22 Cast your cares on the LORD and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall.

Scripture also clearly informs us that God rules over all he has created. He is a great king.

Ps. 47:7-8 For God is the King of all the earth; sing to him a psalm of praise. God reigns over the nations; God is seated on his holy throne.

Ps. 115:3 Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him.

Mal. 1:14 "Cursed is the cheat who has an acceptable male in his flock and vows to give it, but then sacrifices a blemished animal to the Lord. For I am a great king," says the LORD Almighty, "and my name is to be feared among the nations."

God is also a great rescuer, a great deliverer, a great savior. No mess that you or I could possibly get ourselves into is too convoluted or too sticky for **The Almighty** to get us out of. And he's glad to rescue; it pleases him to do so. We have to meet his requirements, but he's a great rescuer. He's proven that by dying so that we could be rescued from sin, from self, from Satan, and from the world.

Ps. 68:20 Our God is a God who saves; from the Sovereign LORD comes escape from death.

Is. 43:3a For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior;

Ps. 18:2a The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer;

Ps. 34:17 The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles.

verse 19 A righteous man may have many troubles, but the LORD delivers him from them all;

We're also blessed to discover in God's word that everything he does is in harmony with his great justice. In fact, God loves justice so much that when he designed his throne, he placed beneath it the foundation of righteousness and justice (Psalm 97:2).

2Th. 1:6a God is just:

Heb. 6:10a God is not unjust;

Is. 30:18 Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion. For

the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him!

Some teachers have their pet student; Isaac favored his older son Esau over his younger son Jacob; Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah; but God does not show favoritism. He's completely impartial.

Dt. 10:17 For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes.

Ro. 2:11 For God does not show favoritism.

1Pt. 1:17 Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear.

There's something about ***The Almighty*** that in the Scripture when people had an encounter with him, nobody had to tell them that they were sinners. They knew it, and somehow they felt undone by their own lives compared to his awesome and sinless presence. We call that spotless purity of God his holiness. God is so incredibly holy that we'll never be able to comprehend, in this life, the vast depth of his holiness.

Ps. 99:9 Exalt the LORD our God and worship at his holy mountain, for the LORD our God is holy.

Rev. 4:8 Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. Day and night they never stop saying: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come."

1Pt. 1:15-16 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

God is also completely reliable and trustworthy. The next two aspects of God's nature help us understand why this is so. God is truth. Therefore, everything he says is true.

Is. 45:19 I have not spoken in secret, from somewhere in a land of darkness; I have not said to Jacob's descendants, 'Seek me in vain.' I, the LORD, speak the truth; I declare what is right.

Is. 65:16a Whoever invokes a blessing in the land will do so by the God of truth; he who takes an oath in the land will swear by the God of truth.

Jn. 14:6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Also, God is faithful. He does what he says and says what he does. We can depend on that. In December of 1990, coach Bill McCartney founded an organization called Promise Keepers. His main premise was that men, when they spoke, needed to be true to their word, thus being reliable. When we speak without properly considering the ramifications of our words, we make a grave mistake. God doesn't do that. No child of the Most High God should do that, either.

Dt. 7:9 Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commands.

Ps. 33:4 For the word of the LORD is right and true; he is faithful in all he does.

Ps. 100:5 For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.

2Th. 3:3 But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.

Many years ago in a prayer meeting, a young man led out in prayer, saying “O God, love me.” That prayer didn't need to be prayed. Asking for God to love us is like asking for water to become wet. God's love for us is not influenced by our asking; it's determined by who he is. God being love was covered in detail in Lesson #8, so for now I'll just give a few scriptures. Each one of the 26 verses of Psalm 136 ends with, “His love endures forever.” When God emphasizes something by repetition, we would do well to pay special attention. Let me read you the first and last verses from that Psalm.

Ps. 136:1 Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good. *His love endures forever.*

Ps. 136:26 Give thanks to the God of heaven. *His love endures forever.*

Ps. 48:9 Within your temple, O God, we meditate on your unfailing love.

Ro. 5:8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

1Jn. 4:8 Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

1Jn. 4:16 And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love.

The Scripture declares that mercy triumphs over judgment (James 2:13). God delights in every circumstance where he can legitimately show mercy. Even King David understood that God's mercy is very great (I Chronicles 21:13).

Dt. 4:31a For the LORD your God is a merciful God;

Dan. 9:9 The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him;

Lk. 6:36 [Jesus speaking] Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

We also need to understand that an important part of God's nature is his graciousness and compassion.

Ex. 34:6 And he [the LORD] passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness,

Jol. 2:13 Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.

Ps. 86:15 But you, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.

On one occasion when Jesus was in deep anguish over the city of Jerusalem, he said, “O

Jerusalem... how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.” As a hen protects her young, God is also deeply committed to protecting his own.

Ps. 46:1 God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.

A refuge is a place of safety you can run to when you're in trouble. God is our refuge.

Ps. 62:8 Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge.

Jn. 10:28-29 [Jesus speaking] I give them [my sheep] eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand.

Some believers who hear the truth that “God is for us,” get the wrong idea. Immediately they picture all manner of finances, pleasures, and conveniences coming their way. That may be what they want, but it's usually not what's best. God being for us means that in every decision he makes concerning us, he's acting in our best interests. It doesn't mean that he caters to our selfish whims. When we need a blessing, he provides just the right blessing, but when we need adversity, he provides just the right trial. By the way, God has shown us even through nature that nothing is as healthy as it needs to be without some adversity.

Ro. 8:31 What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?

Lastly, God is not willing that any should perish.

2Pt. 3:9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

I've said it before, and I'll say it again, whenever one soul drops into hell, it's not because the will of God has been accomplished, it's because the will of God has been resisted. Why can we say that? Because God doesn't **want** anyone to perish.

1Ti. 2:3-4 This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

What does God **want**? He wants all men to be saved; he wants all men to be rescued and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

Before going on to the next section, I'd like to point out that this is not an exhaustive list. I've simply tried to identify some of the more significant aspects of God's nature. There are at least two important reasons why we should know and appreciate the truth of who God is. First of all, we need to know God's nature so that we can approach him properly. The man who addresses God by saying, “What's shakin', bacon?” has probably missed out on appreciating God's absolute authority, his awesome power, and his great holiness. Such a man seems to think that **The Almighty** is just like a human being. Even though God can relate to us perfectly, he's not like us at all. On the other hand, the person who comes to God cowering in fear hoping to avoid getting decimated by the Lord's wrath may need to understand the loving, caring Father's heart of **The Almighty**, and the fact that God himself has even put it into writing that in Christ we may approach him with freedom and confidence (Ephesians 3:12). What we believe about the Most High God really does heavily influence our approach to him. If we're to relate to him in healthy ways, we need a healthy

understanding of who he is.

Secondly, we need to know God's nature so that we can please him better. God's sons and daughters are called to be like their Father in heaven. We believers, his children, need to fulfill his purpose in revealing his nature through our lives. Your life may be the only Bible some people will ever read. Yes, God will, incrementally, change us more and more into his likeness, his nature. But knowing what that nature looks like certainly is a help to getting there. Let's excel in allowing him to shape and mold us to be more like him. Amen.

Foundations Lesson #20

God & the Trinity, Part 3

Going on to page two of our outline, Roman Numeral number three deals with the nature of the trinity. We finite and frail human beings need to realize that in our present state, we'll never fully understand God.

Eph. 3:20

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine...

As this verse points out, our wildest imagination about what God can do is simply not wild enough. There are aspects of God which will remain a **mystery** to us simply because our minds are not sufficient to comprehend him in his fullness. As Zophar the Naamathite declared,

Job 11:7

"Can you fathom the mysteries of God? Can you probe the limits of the Almighty?

So if, after carefully digesting the material in this lesson, you're still in the dark about some aspects of the triune nature of God, take heart. You're not alone. Despite your being tempted to be frustrated about that, you can have **the peace that passes understanding**, knowing that we believers have been called to be **content** with the things we have no control over. God has faithfully given us everything we need in order to live a life that's in harmony with him and full of love for him. If we needed greater intelligence in order to please and glorify God, he would have made us that way.

Having said that, we need to understand that God does expect us to believe him. His word is true, period. For us to humbly accept what he's written is required, and it's fully possible for us to do so, even if there are some things his word says that we have trouble wrapping our heads around. So long as our faith in God and our love for God remain strong, we'll be just fine.

Also, I want to point out that the word "trinity" does not appear in Scripture. That doesn't mean it's wrong to use it, just like it's not wrong to use the word "toothbrush", even though that word doesn't appear in Scripture either. The word "trinity" simply represents our best attempt at putting into language what the Scripture declares to be true about God.

With that in mind, I've defined the word "trinity" as *three persons who subsist in one nature, one divinity equal in glory and co-eternal in majesty; distinct, not separate or divided*. After hearing that definition, you still might have very little idea of what a trinity is. So let's go to the Scripture. That'll provide far greater clarity than if I try to explain my definition to you.

The Scripture is clear and emphatic that God is one.

Dt. 6:4

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.

Is. 45:5-6

I am the LORD, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God. I will

strengthen you, though you have not acknowledged me, so that from the rising of the sun to the place of its setting men may know there is none besides me. I am the LORD, and there is no other.

Gal. 3:20 A mediator, however, does not represent just one party; but God is one.

So we start with the very clear truth of Scripture that God is one. He's not two, three, five, seven, or anything else other than one. However, three are addressed as God in Scripture. First, the Father:

Ro. 1:7b Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

1Co. 15:24 Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power.

There are many other verses of Scripture that identify our Father in heaven as God. I've never encountered anyone who challenged or questioned that, so I'll move on. We also understand from Scripture that Jesus Christ is God.

Jn. 1:1 In the beginning was the Word [here "the Word" in context clearly refers to Jesus Christ], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Ro. 9:5 Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.

Tit. 2:13 while we wait for the blessed hope – the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ,

Heb. 1:8 But about the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom.

So the Father is addressed as God; the Son is addressed as God, and yet also the Holy Spirit is spoken of as God.

Ac. 5:3-4 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 to men but to God."

Peter here indicates that lying to the Holy Spirit is the same as lying to God. These truths leave our natural minds in a bit of a dilemma. God is one, yet three are identified as God. Understandably, this can be difficult to grasp, but again, we need to realize that the physical realm of three dimensions in which we live has restrictions and limitations that do not exist in the unseen realm of the spirit. Jesus Christ himself has shed some light on our dilemma when he said, in John 10:30,

Jn. 10:30 [Jesus speaking] I and the Father are one."

Jn. 17:11b [Jesus praying] Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name – the name you gave me – so that they may be one as we are one.

The Bible doesn't explain the details of how Father and Son are one. But we know they are

because Scripture says so. I believe a part of that oneness has to do with their having the same heart. The same love for the people of the world that the Father has, the Son also has and the Spirit also has. The hatred for sin residing in the heart of the Son, identically resides in the Father and in the Spirit. The patience and wisdom of the Holy Spirit are equivalent to the patience and wisdom found in the Father and in the Son. I imagine there are many other ways in which Father, Son, and Spirit are one. Certainly, there is no disagreement or disunity of any kind that exists between Father, Son, and Spirit. They are one.

We also see that besides Father, Son, and Holy Spirit being identified as God in Scripture, they hold other things in common. For example, each is called Lord.

Lk. 1:32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David,

Ac. 2:36 “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

2Co. 3:17-18 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

The outline lists other areas of commonality between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They're each eternal, have been involved in creating the universe, and creating man. I invite you to read the Scriptures listed on the outline at your convenience. The Bible also speaks of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in similar fashion.

Mt. 28:19 [Jesus speaking] 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,

1Pt. 1:2 who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood:

2Co. 13:14 May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

The last aspect of the triune nature of God we need to cover deals with each of the three – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – being distinct persons.

Mt. 3:16-17 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 lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”

In this passage of Scripture, we see Father, Son, and Holy Spirit each playing a unique role. It was only the Son – not the Father or the Spirit – who was baptized in the Jordan River. Similarly, it was only the Spirit – not the Father or the Son – who descended upon Jesus like a dove. And it was only the Father – not the Son or the Spirit – who spoke from heaven. Because they are distinct persons, they're able to perform distinct functions.

Jn. 14:16-17a [Jesus speaking] And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever – the Spirit of truth.

Again, we see each member of the trinity performing a distinct function. The Son will do the

requesting of the Father; the Father will respond to that request by giving the Spirit, and the Spirit is the one who comes to the believers to be in them. As the outline points out, the Greek word for “another” here means distinct but of the same kind. So the Father will send someone just like Jesus, yet distinct. Then in Mark 13:32 we clearly see that the Father and the Son have distinct minds.

Mk. 13:32 [Jesus speaking] “No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

The last item on our list deals with our prayer lives. Generally – and I say generally because there are several exceptions to this in the New Testament – we pray **to** the Father, **through** the Son, **in** the Holy Spirit.

Mt. 6:9 [Jesus speaking] “This, then, is how you should pray: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,

Ro. 5:1-2 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.

Eph. 6:18a And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.

So we see that each member of the trinity has their unique role to play, yet they're in total harmony and agreement with one another. They are three, yet they are one. We also learn from this that Biblical unity is not a matter of each one of us doing the same thing, it's a matter of each one of us supporting and agreeing with what God has commissioned others to do, even when that's quite different from the assignment God has given us.

Some authors have given us metaphors that would try to help us understand the trinity a bit better. If you have some H₂O, or dihydrogen monoxide, and you put it into a bowl at room temperature, it will be a liquid we call “water.” If you put it into the freezer, you'll then have a solid we call “ice.” If you put it into a tea kettle on the stove and turn up the burner, you'll get a gas we call “steam.” So whether you have water, ice, or steam, the chemical composition remains the same. The nature of each is dihydrogen monoxide, but the appearance of each is distinct. Some living creatures go through a process called metamorphosis. So a caterpillar, a cocoon, and a butterfly can all be the same animal. If these analogies help you understand Father, Son, and Holy Spirit being one yet being distinct, great. If not, don't worry about it. There are a lot of things we won't understand until we get to heaven. Until then, let's just believe the truth of God's holy word. Remember, without faith it's impossible to please God. Amen.

Foundations Lesson #20

God & the Trinity, Part 4

Roman Numeral number four on our outline takes a careful look at the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. Sometimes I introduce this section to my students by asking them a bit of a trick question, which is this: **True or False? Jesus Christ, when he lived on earth, was half man and half God.** What do you think? True or False? The answer is false. He wasn't half man and half God, he was fully human and fully God. When I first came to the Lord, there was a fellow college student who said that we could see Jesus' divine nature when he performed miracles and healed people. OK, true

enough. But then she also said that we could see his human side when he made a whip out of cords and drove all the animals out of the temple. If Jesus had been half man and half God, her position would have been reasonable, but it was, in fact, quite incorrect. Everything Jesus said and did, everything, he did as fully God with all the limitations of a fully human body. When he lived on earth, there was never a moment when he wasn't 100% God, and there was never a moment when he wasn't 100% human.

With that in mind, let's first examine the full deity of our Lord Jesus Christ. We've already seen that Scripture clearly identifies Jesus as God. I won't re-read those verses on our outline. If you'd like to, feel free to pause this recording and look them up. But besides being declared to be God in Scripture, he also showed us he was God by what he said and did. For example, he received and accepted worship. Only God does that.

Mt. 14:33 Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

Mt. 28:17 When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.

Heb. 1:6 And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him."

I imagine if someone tried to worship you, you'd feel very uncomfortable and you'd try to stop them from doing that. Why? Because you know you're not God; you know that it's not fitting or appropriate for you to receive that level of honor. Only God is worthy of receiving worship. Peter felt the same way.

Ac. 10:25-26 As Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet in reverence. But Peter made him get up. "Stand up," he said, "I am only a man myself."

Not only do humans – at least humans in their right mind – feel unworthy to be worshipped, angels likewise refuse to be worshipped.

Rev. 19:10 [the apostle John writes] At this I fell at his [the angel's] feet to worship him. But he said to me, "Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God!"

Rev. 22:8-9 I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me. But he said to me, "Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers the prophets and of all who keep the words of this book. Worship God!"

So whereas both angels and humans, at least sensible humans, stop people from worshiping them, Jesus felt quite comfortable receiving and accepting worship. He seemed to feel that it was appropriate. Only God would do that.

On one occasion, Jesus said, "Can any of you prove me guilty of sin?" to those who were challenging him. No one presented any evidence. Jesus' sinless life is another evidence of his deity. Anyone who lives a sinless life cannot be just a human being. That's because all of us mere humans have a sin nature.

Heb. 4:15 For we do not have a high priest [Jesus] who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin.

1Pt. 2:21-22 To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.”

1Jn. 3:5 But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin.

Scripture also reveals that Jesus existed before he was born. Again, that stunt would be impossible for a mere human to pull off.

Mic. 5:2 “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.”

Jn. 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

As was noted earlier, “the Word” here in context clearly refers to Jesus Christ. He was there in the beginning.

Jn. 8:56-59 [Jesus speaking] Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad.”

“You are not yet fifty years old,” the Jews said to him, “and you have seen Abraham!”

“I tell you the truth,” Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, I am!”

Jesus also forgave people their sins.

Lk. 5:20-21 When Jesus saw their faith, he said, “Friend, your sins are forgiven.”
The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, “Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

Lk. 7:48 Then Jesus said to her [the woman who poured perfume on his feet], “Your sins are forgiven.”

C.S. Lewis in his book Mere Christianity had some powerful things to say about Jesus' forgiving people their sins as an evidence of his being God. I won't read Lewis' quote now because it's lengthy, but if you want to read it, it's included in the Scriptures & Quotes document which is available in the **Additional Resources** section of this web page. Suffice it to say, the Pharisees and teachers of the law were correct in thinking that only God can legitimately forgive sins.

Jesus also demonstrated his divinity by performing miracles.

Jn. 20:30-31 Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Ac. 2:22 [Peter preaching] “Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know.

Ac. 10:38 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because

God was with him.

So to summarize, we can see that Jesus Christ was fully God not just because the Bible declares it to be so, but also because he accepted worship, lived a sinless life, existed before his physical birth, forgave people their sins, and performed healings and miracles. So now let's turn to his full humanity.

1Jn. 4:2-3 This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.

Ro. 1:3 regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David,

Jn. 1:14 The Word [Jesus] became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

Three of the gospel writers record an account of Jesus returning to Nazareth, where he'd lived in his childhood. The people there seemed to have no trouble at all believing he was fully human. After all, he grew up with some of their children. They knew who he was. But difficulty arose in their accepting him as anything more than just one of them. Luke even records that they tried to kill him! The Bible also shows us that Jesus developed as other humans do.

Lk. 2:40 And the child [Jesus] grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him.

Lk. 2:52 And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

Scripture also describes some of Jesus' human needs. Matthew 4:2 mentions hunger. It reads,

Mt. 4:2 After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.

John 19:28 mentions thirst. It says,

Jn. 19:28 Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty."

Mark 4:37-38 mentions sleep. Apparently, at least on this occasion, Jesus was quite a heavy sleeper! It says,

Mk. 4:37-38 A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"

John 4:6 mentions weariness. It says,

Jn. 4:6 Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well.

To summarize the full deity and the full humanity of Jesus, I'd like to turn to Philippians 2:5-11, which reads:

Pp. 2:5-11 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who being in very

nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

This passage tells us that Jesus was in very **nature** God, but found in **appearance** as a man. The original Greek word translated **nature** is μορφή, which means a person's inmost nature; essence, the thing itself. The word translated **appearance** is σχημα, which means an outward expression that does not come from within; scheme. So if you attended a Valentine's Day banquet and they served jello for dessert, either in dessert cups, or in individual heart-shaped molds, or in the shape of a full plate-sized wreath from which you could serve yourself with a spoon, then the **nature** of all three selections would be the same. They would all be made of jello. But the **appearance** would be different. Similarly, Jesus had the inmost nature of God, yet he also had the outward appearance of being human, and those who knew him best never questioned his humanity.

I invite you to look up and read the remaining verses on the outline. There you'll discover the doctrine of the virgin birth – the reality that his mother Mary was a virgin when she gave birth to Jesus, because he had no human father biologically. I imagine Joseph did a fine job of parenting Jesus, but God was Jesus' Father, and it was the Holy Spirit who had impregnated Mary. So, on the closing diagram, we see that Jesus' Father was God, and that his mother, from whom he got his humanity, was Mary. This means Jesus was God in human flesh, fully God and fully man, “Son of God” and “Son of Man.”

Before closing this lesson I want to say that I've deeply appreciated your trust in listening to these lessons. It has been an honor to serve you. I pray that you'll continue to grow strong in the Lord, becoming more and more Christlike. Amen. God bless all of you.